









THE GAMBLER

A STORY OF CHICAGO LIFE

BY

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(*POLIUTO*)

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AND MISCELLANEOUS SKETCHES," ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE moral purpose of this work is the presentation of some of the more salient phases of one of the most dangerous and prevalent vices of the age. To fairly accomplish this end, it has been found essential to touch here and there on the concomitants of gambling.

Some of these adjuncts are not of a pleasant character when offered for public inspection; but in their portrayal, such limitations have been provided as to offend as little as possible the sensibilities of the most refined reader.

Nothing of this objectionable nature has been written which is not absolutely necessary to enforce the lessons of the book in reference to the curse of gaming.

If this work shall so exhibit the hell into which gaming leads, as to prevent here and there some curious youth from journeying thither, it will have served one of the main purposes of the author in its preparation.

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PART FIRST.

I.

HE IS BORN.

Paul Calkins was born of poor and pious parents in an Eastern State. The event occurred some years ago, and was not attended with any commotion in the other planets, or any other indication that nature was in the least perturbed by the new arrival. No silver spoon was found to be in his mouth when he came into the world.

The infant, in fact, was the average brat. It had the color of a boiled lobster, and possessed like all others of the same kind, a disposition to make itself heard through smothered utterances. Life begins as it ends; there are a gasping for air and a rattling in the throat.

There was nothing about the infant to in-

dicating the nature of its future. It was not hooded with a cowl; it was washed, dressed, wrapped in a warm flannel blanket, and then was left to its own reflections with intervals for refreshments. What it occupied itself with at this early stage of its existence cannot even be guessed at. If the teachings of heredity be true, it had already tendencies to good or evil; but if it possessed them it gave no sign.

It progressed from a flannel blanket to long clothes, and then into short clothes, having meanwhile been labeled Paul by his good parents, who took it for granted that he would emulate and adopt the example of that pious saint. In one sense their wishes were realized, for the young Paul, in later life, like his illustrious namesake, was accustomed to "go blind" on many occasions.

He grew up like other boys in the country. He fed the pigs and the chickens; he cared for the baby that came along a year later; he was often and properly switched by his mother, scratched by the cat, and kicked and choked by big and older boys.

He learned his letters in the frame school-house; he went to church and Sunday school;

he was slightly converted at each of the annual "revivals;" he fell in love when he was nine, and again when he was twelve, fourteen, and sixteen; each time with a different girl, and each time with the firm conviction that his present love was the only true, genuine one, and that it would be eternal.

He grew to be a slender youth, well built, with gray eyes, light hair, and fingers which would have been soft and shapely had he handled fewer sticks of stove wood, and a less number of hoes and pitchforks. He was strong, healthy, with a good amount of brains of an average quality. He "ciphered" through the arithmetic, made a bad break in the grammar, could read well, and was well posted on crops, cattle, dogs, pigs and poultry.

Such was his condition, when he became infected with the Western fever. A boy living over in Swan Holler had gone west several years before, and was now home on a visit, and was turning the settlement upside down. He wore store clothes, sported a cane, chewed tobacco, smoked cigars, and was a tremendous swell of at least eighteen karats fineness.

He related most marvelous yarns of the wonderful West. Golden shiners illuminated the sod of the prairie. Diamonds could be had for the picking up. When he invited the boys to "Join me, gentlemen!" at the village tavern, he pulled out a handful of coins, slapped them down on the counter, and grandly told the awe-struck vender, "Pay yourself out o' that!"

After one of these meetings the soul of Paul would be filled with unrest. The oxen as they pulled the plow or harrow, seemed with their wooden yokes, their tedious gait, their stupid endurance of blows and curses, to be a type of himself. The pitchfork began to weigh a ton, the armsful of stove wood weighed down his sensitive being, while the odors of the hog-pens, and of the chicken-coops became unendurable. The crimson-robed west wooed him to her arms, and he yielded.

Loud were the complaints of father and mother when he finally announced his intention. There was no one to tend the "critters" if he left; his own particular colt would be ruined without his personal attention; and besides all that, the old man had expected to

hire the twenty-acre field of Deacon Hopeful for the next season to raise a crop of flax, and if Paul went away, he would have to give it up.

Nevertheless, Paul persisted, and finally went. There was a cousin of the family in the Western town of Burst, and this cousin was made the objective point of Paul's journey. He sold his colt, and secured money enough to purchase a railway ticket; the old lady, who was sniffing grievously as he was leaving, furtively slipped six half dollars, four quarters, and some dimes and nickels into his hand, and thus he was supplied with ample funds.

It was not a joyful separation. The old man pottered around grumpy and silent save an undertone of muttering; several neighbors were on hand and overwhelmed him with directions and advice; and the little sister flew about and fluttered and piped with grief like a wounded bird.

His small trunk and himself were hoisted into the wagon of a farmer who was going to town with a "jag" of barley; and amidst a hurricane of "Good-bye," and "Be a good boy!"—the last from the maternal lips—the

farmer whipped up his nags, and Paul disappeared in a cloud of country dust.

In due season he was landed at the famous town of Burst, in which lived his cousin. The latter was a station agent, had a wife and six children, lived in a small house, was in receipt of only a moderate salary, and naturally was not overcome with joy over the arrival of his Eastern kinsman. However, he invited the traveler to his house, assuring him that he was welcome if it did crowd them; that they could get along for a night somehow, even if they had to double up, or even sleep three in a bed, and take turns at the table, and then remarked that just now times were hard and money scarce, and there wasn't much doing, and no chance for a poor man, any way.

II.

A TOWN WITH A BOOM.

Paul Calkins looked around him when he rose the next morning in Prairie City. There was one main street with wooden sidewalks, one brick building in which were the bank, four saloons, a general store, a livery stable, a wooden "hotel," seven one-story frame-houses, on the fronts of which were signs affording information of choice acre and building lots, farms for sale, and money loaned on real estate. At various distances from the single street were houses scattered over the prairie, a couple of small white wooden churches, one pretentiously rearing a spire, and the other with the base of a contemplated steeple unbuilt, and which looked like the stump of a finger pointing upward; and a gorgeous schoolhouse of brick, with a dome and French roof.

As far as his eye could take in the surrounding prairie, it was a dead level, without a house, a fence, a plowed field, or an improvement of any kind in sight.

"This is a great town," said his cousin, as, after their morning meal they strolled over to the station. "What do you think that lot is worth?" asked he as he indicated a vacant piece of prairie—vacant save as to scores of old tomato and meat cans, a couple of dead dogs, and the hind-axle and wheels of a broken-down wagon, without fence or other indication of improvement.

Paul ran over in his mind the value of land in his native region, and recalling that some of the best in that country was held at the enormous figure of one hundred dollars an acre, concluded that it would be only complimentary to his relative to place the figure on the vacant lot as high as that on the improved farms in his own section. And so he answered :

"I guess about a hundred dollars an acre. There's about a quarter of an acre in that lot, and it might be worth two hundred and fifty."

"Two hundred and fifty dollars!" repeated

the station-agent with supreme scorn. "Why, that property is held at one thousand dollars the front foot!"

"What!" Paul's eyes were so pushed out with wonder that they had the appearance of a large lorgnette. "You're joking!"

"No sir'ee, I aint! Why, look at the lot on which that brick building stands! That is held a good deal higher. That piece of property there where the saloon is, was sold as it stands, for ten thousand dollars."

Paul glanced at the little wooden shanty with a high, false front, and couldn't understand it. "I don't see how it can be so high. Father bought an acre with a house and carpenter shop on it, only a hundred rods from the Corners, and got it for one hundred and fifty dollars."

"Oh, this aint the East," said the other scornfully. "You're played out down there. Here is the coming country, the great center of population and business!"

"But what is there to make this town so valuable?"

"Everything! In the first place we are on the great Inter-Oceanic railway which, when finished, will reach from sea to sea. Then a

road is projected from the great valley of the Pratt River which will tap the line at this point, and will give an outlet to the soda beds and coal fields of the Wyoming mineral region. Another line is being thought of to the Southwest which will connect us with the cattle lands of Texas, and the arable lands of Arizona. Why, sir, this is bound to be the great center and distributing point of the trans-Mississippi region."

"Have you any sawmills or flour mills?"

"Not yet, but they're a coming. A movement is on foot to bring the shops of the line to this town, and to move them from the worthless town of Sky-high, where they are at present. All this region around here, as far as you can see, is the best grazing and farming land in the world. It is all taken up, and is worth already two hundred dollars an acre."

Paul glanced over the surrounding region. There was not a vestige of improvement in sight, from horizon to horizon. The dense population that was to fill this fertile and fortunate area, was all in the future. It made him dizzy as he attempted to comprehend all the teeming possibilities of the favored cen-

ter. He saw in imagination a great city, incoming and outgoing trains, the smoke of innumerable manufactories, and heard the roar of vast multitudes.

That night as he slept in a shake-down on the sitting room floor, visions of wealth filled his dreams, and he saw himself the possessor of corner lots for whose possession great crowds of people struggled, and with outstretched hands tendered him bags of gold. He awoke, fevered and restless, and determined to become the possessor of some of the precious real estate.

For two or three days he was treated by the business men of the town, to whom he was introduced, with distinguished consideration.

"Ah, Mr. Calkins, happy to know you. From the East, I believe! You have struck just the right place, sir. No point in the West offers such facilities as the town of Burst. Real estate is doubling up every six months, and operators are making fortunes in a year. Here, for instance," pointing to a map on the wall showing streets, additions, boulevards, parks, court-house square, churches, and schoolhouses—"is a map of

Burst. That lot there was sold last week for eighty-five dollars a front foot, and the purchaser is about to erect a business block of brick, four stories high, and with all modern improvements. Right next to this property is a choice piece which is owned by an Eastern man who has just failed in his business, and must sell this property at a sacrifice. It can be had for nothing, sir! No such bargain was ever before offered! Why, sir, you will not believe me when I tell you that I am authorized to sell these lots at seventy-five dollars a foot! It is really a shame to sacrifice such a splendid property. It is just the thing for you. One-half down, the balance to run five years on a mortgage at eight per cent. a month. It is literally cheap as dirt. What do you say?"

Paul thought, but did not state, that such was the condition of his finances, that he could not have paid cash down for more than a quart or two of the precious soil, but he pleaded that he would look over the matter and give his decision later.

Successively he was offered all four of the saloons, the hotel, a butcher's shop and any number of vacant lots at a tremendous bar-

gain. He was very much interested, but declined to come to terms for reasons satisfactory to himself.

Meanwhile, his hospitable cousin, although constantly assuring Paul that he was welcome to stay when he hinted about going, was evidently a little uneasy. Then Paul thought he would secure some employment. There ought to be no difficulty, he concluded, in getting something paying to do in so flourishing a place, and one with so marvelous prospects. The extreme suavity and cordiality of the men to whom he had been introduced, led him to believe that an application to any one of them would result in an immediate engagement.

The first one on whom he called was the gentleman who had offered to sacrifice the lots of the bankrupt Eastern manufacturer for Paul's exclusive benefit. When Paul entered somewhat hesitatingly the office of the dealer, the latter jumped from his seat, came forward with extended hand, while a broad, sunny smile irradiated his yellow visage, and said:

"How do you do, Mr. Calkins? What beautiful weather we are having!" (It was blowing a gale whose icy lances went through

and through the shivering frame of the visitor). "We always have such magnificent weather in this section! No malaria here, no consumption, no ague! Ah, it is delightful!" And he swelled out his chest with an inspiration of air, as if it were as stimulating as champagne.

"I suppose you have called to close out that trade, this morning? You are a lucky dog! Since you were in yesterday, no less than sixteen different men have been in trying to get that same property. They even offered an advance over the price I agreed to let you have it at, but I refused. To be sure, there was no binding agreement between me and you, but I refused to listen to them, as I considered myself in honor bound to stick to my offer."

Poor Paul listened with throbbing heart, and a face that began to show flashes of crimson. He at first concluded that he would make some excuse and go away without broaching the question of employment; and then determined that he *must* make a beginning at this point. It occurred to him that the man had shown himself so friendly and so anxious to benefit him, he probably would

be glad to assist him to obtain employment. On the spur of the thought he said:

“I am not really just now in a condition to purchase any real estate. I am a farmer’s son who has come west to seek his fortune in your new and glorious country, and what I now want is some employment—”

At this point he hesitated and stopped. A change had been rapidly passing over the countenance of his listener. The innumerable wrinkles all over his face which had done yeoman service as co-adjutants of a smile, suddenly resolved themselves into a frown, while his brows were corrugated and his lips closed firmly against his teeth.

“What! You don’t want to buy any property? You’re no capitalist looking for investment? And all you want is a job of work? Good God! what deceit! Young man, you have grossly deceived me! You have wounded me! No sir! you can’t get any job here. Get out; you have outrageously misled me! Good-morning, sir.”

Humiliated beyond expression, Paul, restraining an ardent desire to throttle the old wretch, walked out into the street. He then, within the next few days, made the rounds of

the town, inquiring in each place of business for employment. Some gave him an insolent refusal; others thought they might need help when the fall trade began to come in. All who offered any remarks beyond a curt refusal, said it was a dull season; that they had never known anything just like it, and hadn't as much to do as they could attend to themselves.

He had a trifle better luck at the "hotel." The landlord had heard his request and after looking the applicant over critically, said:

"Wall, I dunno. Mebbe there may be suthin'. Pete has been on a bender for three months, and isn't no good any more. I think I'll kick him out. There aint much to do, and I can't afford these dull times to pay you anything. You can come and board an' lodge and wait around till somethin' better turns up."

This was not all that was in the enthusiastic dreams of Paul when he resolved to go West, and seek his fortune; but it was "Hobson's choice," that or nothing. He determined to accept the place till he could look around and find something better.

He cleaned, trimmed and lighted the lamps;

he went to the train to meet an occasional traveler ; he attended to the fires ; swept out the public room, dusted the furniture, and made himself generally useful.

And this was the initial step of Paul Calkins' taken in his march toward good or bad fortune in the great West. It was a long distance to his goal, and for the present, he was compelled as soldiers do, to "mark time," which means motion without advance.

III.

HE IMPROVES HIS OPPORTUNITIES.

"Inter-Oceanic hotel, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Any baggage?"

"Only this sample case."

This conversation occurred one day at Burst station, between Paul, the runner of the Inter-Oceanic hotel, and a middle-sized young man who dismounted from the westward-bound train. The latter was about twenty-three, with a light, active figure, a swarthy complexion, dark hair, keen black eyes, a mouth with full, sensual lips, and a nose that just leaned in the direction of the aquiline. He spoke in a musical voice with rapidity and emphasis.

It was in January, and the traveler was warmly wrapped in a heavy overcoat, richly furred at the cuffs and collar. He wore a

seal-skin cap, and thus clad, with a moustache that curled up at the ends, he was a handsome, dashing, rakish young fellow in appearance, with an expression of entire self-satisfaction on his mobile countenance.

Reaching the hotel, he wrote on the thin book of registry in a bold, handsome script, the name—

“John Lafarge, Chicago.”

He did not add “Ill.,” after the name of the city. No Chicago resident ever does. Chicago stands by itself, and to place the name of the State after it would be to lower the dignity of the city.

“Fine town you’ve got here,” he remarked ironically as he surveyed the rutted and frozen streets, the cheap wooden houses and the illimitable stretch of prairie. “Why, look at it!” he continued indignantly; “I was told by a business man in Chicago who owns some property here, that Burst is the finest town between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains. He’s never been here, that’s certain. Where are all the business houses which he told me of? He said I could put in a week here and find business humping every minute. I can go through every house in town in

twenty minutes. I'll do it, and leave on the next train."

The next train did not appear on time. A sudden blizzard, accompanied by a heavy snow, went howling over the desolate prairies and obstructed railway travel. It was two days before the visitor was able to leave Burst.

During this period the commercial traveler was ill at ease. There was but one girl who waited on the table, and she was at once stoop-shouldered, heavy-jawed, viragoish in expression, and withal suspicious apparently of the purity of the motives of the male sex. She scowled savagely at the drummer, evidently looking on him as an exceedingly dangerous young man who should be assiduously guarded against at the very outset.

Thus debarred from one of the most common and interesting diversions of the drummer, that of flirting with the dining-room girls, Lafarge was horribly *ennuié*.

"Isn't there any pretty girls in Burst?" he would inquire impatiently of Paul, as he gazed dismally through the narrow window frames, and saw everywhere only the falling, driving snow.

"Yes, one or two, but they are all snowed in."

During the course of the evening Paul went into Lafarge's room with some fuel, when the other suddenly broke out :

"Say, young fellow, can you play any games of cards?"

"Not many. I learned to play old sledge in the haymow when I was a boy, and since then I've picked up a little euchre."

"Can you play poker?"

"No."

"No? Well, now you go and get a box of gun wads, some coffee beans, kernels of corn, or anything that we can count with, and I'll teach you the game. A young man in the West who can't play poker is not half educated."

Nothing loth, Paul secured the requisite material for "chips," and was soon initiated into the mysteries of the great American game. "I'm mighty sorry," said his instructor, "that you haven't any 'stuff,'" meaning thereby cash, "but even a game for corn is better than none at all."

Paul proved an apt student, and his teacher, pleased with his quick appreciation, his ex-

cellent memory and willingness, instructed him in all the minutiae of the game. He conceived somewhat of a fancy for the young man, who was natural, intelligent, and utterly unlike the average hotel-runner.

When the commercial traveler finally found opportunity to leave, he shook Paul's hand warmly as he was getting on the train, and said in his rapid, cheery manner :

"So long, old fellow ! Come to Chicago just as soon as you can, and don't rot out in this infernal wilderness. You know my address, and if you ever come to the city, come and see me."

One day, some months later, in the spring, his relative, the station-agent, rushed into the hotel and asked for Paul. He soon found him, and all excitement, burst out with :

"Paul, your time has come at last ! The brakeman of No. 65 fell off the roof of a car, and is badly hurt. They have laid him off, and they want some one to take his place. Come right along ! You have thirty minutes before the freight starts, and if you attend to business, as I know you will, you'll get a job."

In a brief time Paul took leave of the land-

lord, who wished him much luck, and within the half hour was an employé of the Inter-Oceanic system of railways.

He was strong, active, fearless, and so well did he perform the temporary duties assigned him that, on the report of the conductor, he was given a permanent place.

It might possibly be of interest to the reader to present some details of the life of Paul as a brakeman. One might speak of the arduous character of his labors, of the savage storms which he had to face, the icy car-tops which he had to clamber over in the darkness of midnight, of the freezing cold which assailed him during the winter months; and how, in a quiet way, like other brave men of his calling, he filled an unnoticed, albeit a heroic part in the great system with which he was connected.

During all this period he was saving, frugal, abstemious, and he soon succeeded in clothing himself in good shape, and in accumulating a snug sum of money.

The advantages of Chicago as portrayed in glowing colors by Lafarge had never faded from his mind, and Chicago always presented itself as the Mecca of his worship. At length

he earned the right to ask for a vacation which was readily granted him, and in less than a week thereafter he found himself in the Garden City.

IV.

A COUNTRYMAN IN TOWN.

It was his first visit to a great city and despite the fervor of his dreams as to its magnitude, the reality was far in advance of his anticipations.

The first impressions produced on one who stands in the presence of London, Paris, or any of the great cities, are of awe, overwhelming, prostrating. They have all the elements of the stupendous; massiveness, concentration, vast dimensions. The hum of their activity vibrates the solid earth. There is infinite confusion for the visitant just from the country, in the innumerable streets, the mass of vehicles, and the crowds of hurrying people.

There comes to such a stranger at once the feeling of littleness in the presence of such magnitude, and of elasticity as he witnesses the rush of the multitudes. The sluggish

countryman, the moment his feet strike the pavements of the city, elevates his stooping shoulders, quickens his step, inspired by the atmosphere of energy and activity which environs him.

As Paul rolled along in the omnibus to a hotel he was dazed by the shifting panorama of the streets, the clamor of the vehicles on the granite, and the throngs of men and women on the sidewalks. It seemed to him as he saw the rush of the people that there must be some tremendous thing happening, to the scene of which the entire population was hurrying. The while, there penetrated his soul a strange and powerful exhilaration; it was the passage through him of the electricity generated always by the impact and friction of human units.

After supper, he strolled out for a walk. It was nearly eight o'clock and the sidewalks were crowded with people hurrying to places of amusement. Electric lights filled the night with splendid views of marble façades, the gorgeous and parti-colored windows of the druggists, and the variegated entrances of palatial saloons. It was a scene in Fairyland, and he wandered on as if exhilarated by some intoxicating potion.

He felt a light tap on his shoulder, and glancing to his side he saw a young man with a grip-sack in one hand and a wallet in the other.

"I beg your pardon," said the young man in a soft, insinuating voice, "you've dropped your pocketbook."

Paul ran his hand into his breast pocket and answered, "No, mine is all right; I haven't lost one."

"Oh, I thought you must have dropped it. Dear me, I'm sorry! What would you do if you were me? I've got to catch a train, and I'm a stranger in town. This wallet must be a valuable one. See!" He undid the clasp and opened the covers between which were many greenback bills, and also papers.

"My! my! what shall I do? I'm on my way to California, and I must go on this train. Hold on, I'll tell you what. You take it. You can advertise it and thus find the owner. And see here, there will be a reward for it and as I am only a poverty-struck theological student, I would be glad to have a portion of the reward. I'll give you my address, and you can forward the amount to me."

He began to fumble in his coat pockets as if for a card and pencil, and then said :

“ I’m so confused ! Im sure I’ll miss the train ! Say, just give me five dollars and if there is any more of it my share, you can keep it.”

“ All right !” said Paul, who was very much impressed with the conscientiousness and honesty of the young student. He took the wallet and was about to open it when the other said hastily :

“ No, no ! don’t take it out of that ! When the owner calls for it he should be able to find the contents untouched, and the same bills that were in it when he lost it.”

Paul saw the justice of this suggestion, and pulling out his own roll he selected one of the limited number of fives in the package, and handed it to the student.

“ Thank you ! God bless you, young man ! I should judge that you are a stranger in this great city. Look out for swindlers and confidence men. Luck to you ! I must be off, good-bye !” and he rushed away and was soon lost in the darkness.

Paul was much pleased over the incident. He would find the owner of the lost wallet ;

he might prove to be some wealthy nabob who, appreciative of the honesty of the finder, might give him a start in the world. That night he slept with the precious wallet under his pillow. No thief was going to deprive him of the benefits of picking up this treasure.

When he woke in the morning his first thought was as to the wallet. What to do he did not know. He pondered over the matter for some time, and then suddenly bethought himself of Lafarge. He had his address; he would go and see him, and he would advise him what to do.

He at once proceeded to put his idea into effect. By several inquiries he at last reached a building on Wabash avenue which occupied nearly an entire block, and was a half dozen stories in height. He did not have any trouble to find Lafarge. Before he entered the door he discovered that gentleman through one of the plate-glass windows seated in a chair and tipped back so that his heels rested on a packing box at a point considerably above his head.

Paul walked directly up to the other, stretched out his hand, and said :

“ Mr. Lafarge, how do you do? ”

Instantly Lafarge straightened up his chair with such celerity that he nearly upset himself, then cordially seized the hand of his visitor and warmly ejaculated, "How do you do! how do you do! I'm awfully glad to see you. When'd you come in?"

"Just got in last night."

"Oh, last night, eh? Where you stopping?"

Paul informed him of the name of the caravansery at which he was domiciled.

It was very evident that the smiling drummer, for once, was "off his base." It is a cardinal sin on the part of one of his profession to ever forget the face or name of a customer; and yet here was a man whom he knew to be a country acquaintance, and he could not recall his name, or even the bill of goods he had sold him.

Ashamed to confess his ignorance, he attempted to gain his point by circumlocutory finesse.

"How did you leave all the boys?" he asked, assuming that whoever the visitor might be, there were always some boys in the vicinity.

"All the same as usual."

The drummer was baffled. He had ex-

pected that when he asked about the "boys" the visitor would mention the name or proceedings of some of them, which would give him the needed clue. He tried another tack.

"What road did you come in on?"

"The C. Q. X. Y."

The road thus designated with its branches, covers half the continent. Again the interlocutor was repulsed.

A brilliant idea seized him.

"Let's step over to your hotel for a moment. I want to see Johnson, the clerk." He hurried his visitor over to the hotel, nodded to Johnson familiarly, and said, "I see you have one of my old friends here," indicating Paul by a nod over his shoulder, "and you must give him the best in the house. By the way, does your room suit you? If not, you must have one that does. What number are you in?"

Paul informed him that No. 808 was a very good room, although pretty well up, and as he was speaking Lafarge ran his eye over the page of the register for the day before, saying:

"I wonder if there is anybody here from Dakota."

Opposite 808 he read, "Paul Calkins, Burst."

"Well, Paul," said he in a manner as if Paul were his constant associate, and he knew his name as well as that of his brother, "how do you like Chicago, what you have seen of it?"

They chatted about matters and things in Burst, and after a little Paul said he would like to get his advice on a certain matter.

"Cert!" said the drummer; "what is it?"

"It is about the disposition of a large sum of money that has come into my possession."

Lafarge's black eyes flashed. "That so? Well, blaze away. Anything I can do you're very welcome to, I'm sure."

He then proceeded to relate the incident of the night before of his meeting with the theological student, and the finding of a heavily-laden wallet. At the beginning of the narration Lafarge's face indicated intense eagerness, but it speedily changed to one of amusement, and then of good-natured contempt. As Paul carefully pulled out the precious wallet, the drummer asked, with poorly concealed irony:

"What do you guess is the amount in the wallet?"

"A very large one, I have no doubt, from the bulky appearance."

"And what do you suppose the grateful owner will do for you when he gets back his wealth? Set you up in business, eh?"

"Well, I don't really know," answered Paul. "I shall at least expect that he will make good the five dollars I gave to the student."

"Student! Oh my, this is too good! Ha, ha, ha!" and he roared with laughter.

Paul watched him with great surprise. "What is it?" he finally asked when the roaring drummer stopped for want of breath.

It is unnecessary to give the language in which Lafarge characterized poor Paul, or the humiliation and chagrin of the latter when he learned that he had been the victim of a venerable swindle.

"However," said Lafarge, "it wont hurt you. Five dollars is not a large amount to pay for the lesson. From this out, you will have your eye teeth cut, and will be on the lookout for young theological students, and other confidence operators."

V.

HE INSPECTS THE CITY.

Paul kept his "weather eye" open after this, and was on the constant lookout for breakers. He was two or three times seized by the hand by affable young men who addressed him as Mr. Johnson, and who mistook him as an old acquaintance from Oshkosh, and who handsomely apologized when assured that they were mistaken. The fact that Paul, in these cases, while stating his real name always gave the little town in the East as his residence, effectively prevented the bunko operators from carrying out their projects. There were no means by which they could claim an acquaintance with anybody in that remote locality.

- Paul was an ingenuous youth and immensely susceptible to the smiles, bright eyes, and shapely foot of a pretty woman.

He was sufficiently well formed and handsome to have an excellent opinion of his attractions; and hence, he was not at all astonished, albeit, much gratified to discover that many women whom he encountered on the street regarded him with marked evidences of interest. Often would he meet a couple of girls who would gaze at him with undisguised admiration, looking him straight in the eyes with a freedom and a strength that would bring a blush to his cheek, and a shrinking sensation about his heart.

Accustomed all his life to the sturdy figures of the country lasses, to their sunbrowned complexion, substantial hands and their not always well-fitting garments, the slenderness, sprightliness, trim garb, bright and languishing eyes of the city belles, produced on him a marvelous effect. They seemed beings of a finer mould than those he had known all his life, and he worshiped them in accordance with this superior estimate.

He visited the theaters, and if his admiration was excited by the women whom he met on the street, he was enraptured by the divinities whom he saw on the stage. All the arts of the toilette, assisted by the gor-

geous surroundings, and the artistically arranged lights, gave to the heroines of the stage a beauty which to him seemed more than earthly. It was something supreme, divine.

The realism of the ballet, with its rounded limbs, swelling busts, gleaming arms, with its ravishing poses, its graceful movements, its rhythmic advances and retreats, its tender wooings, and scornful repulses, affected him until the sensuous chords of his nature thrilled like the strings of a fingered harp.

It was a fairy world into which he had been thrown. A world which far exceeded in its splendor the wildest and most extravagant of his dreams. Often while at the play did he believe that the heroine of the drama distinguished him among the upturned faces; and again and again was he certain that in her careless glance over the audience the eye of the premiere danseuse had dwelt for a single instant on his glowing face.

Ah, glorious youth! Youth, with its effusiveness, its exquisite sensitiveness, its impressiveness, its susceptibility! Youth which suspects not, dreams not of the agency of bran in the shapely ankle, of carmine on the

glowing cheek, of belladonna in the languishing eyes, of pencil-point in the arched eyebrows and in the long lashes behind which the mischievous orbs play bo-peep!

One night after having been to the theater, Paul started for a walk to cool his heated blood. It was close to midnight, and the streets in the vicinity of the place of amusement were thronged with theater audiences. He turned into a deserted side street to escape the jam, and strolled leisurely in the direction of the courthouse. It was an hour when the moon, at its full, shone with a silvered brightness that revealed everything with a distinct fidelity. Just then a light footstep came tapping along behind him, and then there swiftly passed him the slender figure of a woman.

A cloth cloak, close-fitting, showed a delicate and yet perfect figure. The feathered hat was wound with a veil which covered the upper portion of her face as if to prevent recognition on the part of the public. In her hand she carried a package wrapped in paper, and which seemed too heavy for one of her slender build. Paul saw the figure as it passed, and thought how late it was for so

young a girl to be abroad in the streets of a great city, and sympathized with her in her apparent loneliness.

She passed him with a swiftness which indicated her fear of his presence in the lonely place, reached the corner some distance ahead of him, crossed to the middle of the street, then halted, hesitated a moment, turned, and came back directly toward Paul. She searched her pocket as she came, and as she reached near him, she stopped, glanced at him, started again, stopped once more, and wheeling about faced him, and as she did so threw up her veil, revealing a most charming face, and eyes that were swimming with tears.

"Oh, sir!" she said, and then her voice was interrupted with sobs.

Paul was immediately interested in this picture of distress, and inquired kindly:

"What is it, miss? Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes. I fear I've lost my purse, and can't pay my car-fare, and shall have to walk home. I'm so afraid; it's solate, and so many wicked people are out this time of night!"

Paul was about to volunteer the price of car-fare or his escort to her home, when a

voice suddenly broke the momentary stillness.

“Here, now! None o’ yer thricks on travelers! Be off wid yerself, or Oi’ll run you in.”

At the same moment a blue-coated, brass-buttoned giant issued from a recess in the corner building, holding in his hand a club which he swung vigorously in order to give emphasis to his remarks. Paul glanced at him for an instant, and then turned to look at the girl. He was just in time to see her scurrying like a quail along the sidewalk, and disappear in an alley.

“Why,” said Paul, “that lady—”

“That lady!” repeated the policeman with a tone of intense scorn. “That lady! begod that’s good! Oh, come off! Ye’d better go home yerself,” said the guardian of the night, after looking steadily for a moment into Paul’s face. “An’ whin ye git there, ye’d best stay there an’ attend to feedin’ the pigs an’ the chickens.”

A great wave of humiliation swept over Paul; and bitterly reproaching himself for his stupidity, he went to his hotel and to bed, where he lay and cursed himself for an idiot till long after midnight.

VI.

A DETOUR TO SLAUGHTER HOLLER.

Meanwhile something of importance had occurred down in Slaughter Holler, the native town of Paul. One day there straggled into the neighborhood an invalid geologist laden with a hammer for chipping rocks, and a bale of medicines, for his dyspepsia. He was from a college many miles away, and had been ordered by his medical adviser to go into the country for a month, and to climb hills, and to eat the food of the farmers—boiled pork and rye-and Injin bread.

A small stream cut through the Calkins farm, leaving exposed here and there walls of slate to which the economical children of the neighborhood had from time immemorial resorted for material for “cipherin’-pencils.” The invalid geologist happened by sheer accident, one day, in nosing around, to encoun-

ter this wall of rock. He replaced his spectacles which had been jarred off by his head by coming in contact with a projecting shelf, and then looked angrily at the obstacle against which he had bumped. He saw it was a dark, laminated mass, and with his hammer he broke off a scale which he felt of with thumb and finger, tasted of it with the tip of his tongue and smelt of with his nose. Then he bit off a little morsel, which he proceeded to chew.

"Fissile, clayey, argillaceous!" he exclaimed. He pried off a thin layer with a small chisel, and balancing it on his finger, he tapped it lightly with his hammer, meanwhile listening intently with an inclined ear; having smelt, felt, tasted of it, he was now trying to hear it.

"Has the right ring," he said, and then he brought the remaining sense into operation, and carefully looked over the mass.

"The lines of stratification have no reference to those of cleavage," he soliloquized in an audible tone, "although this often occurs in true slate. It has the right color, hardness, and it cannot be that it is schist."

He took some specimens away with him,

and that evening astonished the wife of his farmer-host by asking for a kettle of water in which he put some black pieces of stone, and then placed it on the stove to boil. After a time he took the pieces, examined them carefully with a microscope, placed them in the hot oven of the stove, baked them for an hour, and then put them to soak in cold water.

"My gracious me!" said the lady that night to her husband, when they had sought the seclusion of their bedroom, "what on airth was that professor man tryin' to do with them stones? He biled, roasted 'em and put 'em to soak just as reg'lar as if they'd a-been suthin' to eat!"

"Mighty queer, them city chaps!" was the response of the husband. "They're allus pokin' aroun', nobody knows wot fur, and as fur me, I don't care a darn, nohow!"

As for the professor, he vouchsafed no information. His dyspepsia soon after seemed to disappear, and he at once followed its example.

It was not many moons after this incident that a surprising increase in woodchucks, or rather in woodchucks' holes, was discovered by one of the neighboring boys.

“When I was out to the wood pasture,” he said, “I seen more’n a dozen new woodchuck holes. There’s a lot on ’em comin’ here.”

“P’raps,” said the farmer, “it’s goin’ to be a hard winter, an’ the woodchucks is gittin’ ready fur it. The husks is pooty thick on the corn, an’ that’s another sign of a tight winter.”

The boy had ecstatic visions of digging out some of the woodchucks by the aid of a shovel, some other boys, and a splay-footed cur that helped drive the cows to the pasture.

Meanwhile the nights in the vicinity suffered from strange noises. The slumbering neighbors were aroused in the small hours of the morning by the roll of wheels, the clatter of the feet of swift-moving horses, and the voices of men. One young man had remained at home one Sunday, while the others went to the village church.

“I swow,” said he when relating what he saw when the rest were absent, “I seen three men come along in a two-hoss spring wagon, with some long things in their arms and leanin’ against their shoulders which looked like guns. Thinks I them’s some city fellers goin’ a shootin’. They went on over the hill out-a-sight, and bimeby I heerd some laffin over

in the swale. I kinder sneaked up the ridge, and there was them three fellers a workin' a machine like a big auger."

All these occurrences mystified exceedingly the population of Slaughter Holler and the vicinity; and the excitement was increased when a rumor prevailed that there was a chap stopping over at Calkinses who wanted to buy a farm somewhere in the up country. The new comer was a plain, farmer-like person, with heavy cowhide boots, a shock head of auburn hair, and rough in speech and manners. He'd been living, he announced, on the flats about sixty miles up the river.

"I got a good place," he said, "of two hundred acre, and I'm suited well enough, but *she*"—they always allude to the wife as "she,"—"thinks there is ager thereabouts and is bound to move up in the hills. I'm lookin' aroun' for suthin'. I want a snug place of one hundred, or a hundred and fifty or two hundred acres. Ef I can find somethin' that'll suit *her*, I'll pay all it's wuth."

He made his headquarters at the Calkins' farm.

"Wot mought you consider this piece o' land wuth?" he asked the owner.

"It aint for sale," was the reply, "but ef it was in the market I'd consider it cheap at one hundred dollar an acre."

"Phew!" whistled the gentleman from the lowlands. "Why, it's half hill and swamp, and there aint no woods on it wuth speakin' of; there's stones on all the land, the fences is out of repair, the barn wants a ruff, and the house aint in good shape, and that well's cavin' in and it'll cost a sight o' money to put the farm in shape."

Farmer Calkins responded with the statement that while the fences might "need a little fixin' up, and there ought to be some little tinkerin' here and there, there want no better piece o' land in all the upper country. Only 'leven miles from the railroad, three churches within four miles, affordin' gospel privileges that few other places had, and only eight miles to the county seat."

The other pooh-poohed the farmer, but still hung around and dickered. He went off to look at other property in other directions, and always came back to the Calkins', and related to them what bargains he had been offered in this and that town.

"Somehow," he would say, "I've taken a

sneakin' likin' to this ere farm, on account of its manner of bein' located, and 'twould suit *her*. What d'ye say now to fifty dollar an acre, and you to throw in that yearling bull and the span of black mares?"

The price did not suit Calkins; he wanted a hundred, although he well knew that the land was worth no such figure; but it was a matter of pride in that vicinity among the farmers, to value their land at an even hundred per acre. It was a high-sounding figure, one calculated to elevate the importance of the owner, and to astonish the casual inquiring stranger who was curious as to the worth of property.

Finally, the would-be purchaser with great reluctance advanced his offer to seventy-five dollars per acre.

"It's my very last offer," he said. "It's a darn sight more'n the place is wuth, but I can't find anything hereabouts which will suit *her*. Wot d'ye say?"

That night the farmer and his wife had a long talk. Said she, "Dannel, there's something behind all this. Wot duz that man want of this farm at any such fancy price? It aint wuth one-half wot he sez he'll give fur it.

Now, you jest hang on and see wot he'll do. He may go a good deal higher, but ef he don't, then we kin let him have it at a lower figger."

To shorten the proceedings of a long confab, it may be stated that the stranger kept raising in his figures, until he finally amazed Farmer Calkins by jumping at once to the astounding figure of five hundred dollars per acre. The stranger was red-hot with rage when he finally made this proffer.

"Take this offer or go to the devil; it's your very last chance!"

Calkins thought that his visitor was an escaped lunatic, and attempted to temporize:

"Five hundred an acre is high enuff, and I'll be glad to sell at that price. When do you want possession?"

"Don't you worry about that!" said the man, who clearly saw the suspicion of the farmer. "Come into the house and sign this paper."

He seated himself, and taking writing material from his satchel, he rapidly wrote the following, which he pushed over to Calkins:

"There, sign that!"

Calkins with confused vision managed to spell through the note, which read:

“ For the sum of one thousand dollars whose receipt I acknowledge herewith, I agree to sell the farm known as the Calkins farm in Slaughter Hollow, and by me owned, for the sum of five hundred dollars an acre, to Jabez Coffin, providing that the property be transferred to the new purchaser within ninety days, and the total amount in cash be paid when the transfer is made.”

Silas Calkins, it is needless to say, first dutifully consulted *her* and then signed the paper. A roll containing ten one-hundred dollar bills was handed him by the purchaser, who at once left, saying he would be around in a week or two to look over the property.

He never came back, but in due time others did with machinery and proceeded to take possession. It was only then that Calkins and the neighbors discovered that underneath his farm was located the best quarry of slate on the American continent.

VII.

PAUL GOES EAST.

Paul received the news as to the sale of the farm just a couple of days before the expiration of his vacation. He at once resigned his position and went home to share the family excitement over the possession of great wealth. On his arrival he found himself a tremendous lion. People who had scarcely noticed him when a lad on the farm, now extended to him a fulsome worship. The daughters of "Square" Weckford, who had always elevated their noses at such an angle in his presence that he was far below the line of their vision, now lowered their organs of smell to a point which permitted them to look him squarely in the face.

Paul was pleased, of course, with this deference, but it left no deep impression. The Weckford girls were the aristocracy of Slaughter Holler, and their smiles in an earlier

day would have been to Paul a priceless favor. But he had traveled since then, and he could not but contrast the freckled sisters with their dull gray eyes, with the artistic beauties he had encountered in his travels.

"I should be pleased to have you write me when you go West," said the elder Miss Weckford, with a girlish giggle.

"Thank you!" was the sole response.

He became nauseated with the odor of the incense incessantly burned under his nose, and despite all the pleas of his friends he determined to return to Chicago. His father gave him a small sum of money, promising to do better when the final payments were made on the land.

Two weeks after the total sum had been paid over, Silas Calkins was carried to the graveyard on the hill. The shock had been too much for him, and it killed him. He illustrated the truth of the assertion that "men die just as they are ready to live." It is often seen that many men who have accumulated fortunes and completed a fine house in which to live in idleness and comfort, die within a brief period.

He died without a will. The family held

a conference, and the one hundred thousand dollars was divided among them by agreement; the widow receiving twenty thousand dollars, while the other eighty thousand was equally divided between the two children.

Paul, being of age, came into possession of his share at once, and having changed it into sight drafts payable at Chicago, he soon after left for the West with the intention of making it his permanent home.

This determination was based largely on the results of a conversation held with La-farge when he had heard of the discovery of the slate quarry.

"Now, my boy," said his friend, "you are going to get some money, which did not cost you an hour's thought or labor. You can afford to be generous with it. Put away two-thirds of whatever you may get in some secure place where it will be drawing interest, put the remainder in a bank where you can draw it as you need, and devote this amount to seeing the world, and learning something of life."

"Would you advise me to travel?"

"No, not for the present. You can get your degrees here in Chicago as well as you

can in any other city in the world. This place has all there is of any consequence. It has the sins of Paris, the piety of a Quaker settlement, the good women and the bad ones, the revivals, gambling, champagne, opportunities for goodness and dissipation, for legitimate business and swindling, for speculation and desirable investment, and plenty of smooth highways which lead direct to heaven and the other place; in fact, there is nothing which is longed for by the regenerated or the depraved souls that cannot be had in this wonderful city. You stay right here!"

Paul's eyes sparkled as he listened to the enthusiastic utterances of Lafarge.

The latter seemed to be inspired by his own thoughts and words. He leaped into the middle of the room, and then with his head thrown on one side, and arms flung aloft, with the weight of his body resting on one foot while the other touched its extended toe on the floor, he said: "Would you dance, then behold!" and he capered and swung like an agile danseuse. "Here you have the beauties of the stage, ravishing, full of sensuous suggestions. Would you have the music? Behold again!" Assuming the attitude of a

singer, with languishing and appropriate gestures, he sang and trilled in a wonderful falsetto a bar from *Don Giovanni*. "This is your Patti, your Nevada, and you have them here in this glorious city.

"Would you ride on a powerful trotter along the thronged boulevards; would you drive in a luxurious carriage on fashionable afternoons when beauty and wealth are abroad in their fullness; would you occupy the most conspicuous boxes when the world of fashion is out in force to witness a Salvini, or listen to a Patti? If so, you must stay here!" As Lafarge referred to each of these phases, he illustrated them with sweeping gestures and movements of his body. He rose and fell gracefully, as if in the stirrups of the rider; with folded arms and look of supreme repose, he leaned back against the carriage cushions in the drive, and with impassioned expression mimicked the imagined artist on an imaginary stage.

Paul witnessed these singular actions of Lafarge with a bounding heart. The environment became filled with swift music, the soft rhythm of dancing feet, the flush of the crimson cheeks of the dancers, and the languishing harmonies of social enjoyments.

“ You are right !” he ejaculated with enthusiasm. “ I will stay here and take my degrees in this famous school, and you shall be my preceptor.”

“ I accept ! And now to commence your education. First, business, afterward pleasure. You will go to a tailor, and so soon as possible shed your rustic wear. Meanwhile, you will give many hours each day to athletic practice, and you will also secure a private teacher, and be taught to dance. Look out for yourself during this period. Do not be induced by ‘mine owners’ to invest in gold bricks ; do not waste your money in trying to guess under which thimble the elusive pea is hidden ; do not bet your wealth in efforts to discover the location of the agile jack in three-card monte ; don’t loan your cash to strangers who offer you bogus bonds for security. In short, never play against another man’s game.”

Paul was just twenty-two years of age, of medium size, with a compact, well-knit figure. His life on the farm in the open air, had given him powerful lungs, a perfect stomach, and muscles of iron. He was neither handsome nor the opposite ; but he had a strong, pleas-

ant, engaging face, a frank manner, and was an easy conversationalist.

He had a good common school education, and had improved his mind by reading. He was conscientious in his composition, unacquainted with evil save in name, ambitious, and anxious to please those with whom he came in contact.

He was now at the critical point in his career. He was easily influenced, fond of admiration, and amidst the proper surroundings had capabilities for the development of a high order of life. It was a perilous point in his career when he parted with Lafarge; how important then, he failed to comprehend.

Paul diligently followed the advice of Lafarge as to athletics and dancing. He made unexceptionably rapid progress in both; he led in a few months, the boxers, fencers, bell and club-swingers of the classes. He was noted for his unusual strength and activity. He became a good dancer, one sufficiently taught to appear with credit in any of the various dances in vogue in modern society. His correct deportment and easy manners commended him to the favorable consideration of his teacher, who invited him to meet

with his classes, and in time, to assist at his occasional soirees.

As a result he established some acquaintance with the young people, by whom he was invited to their homes. Six months after commencing the course prescribed by Lafarge, he was a fairly-accomplished society man, and had obtained the entrée into many excellent families.

VIII.

THE FETICH TEMPLE.

It was a stormy night in November. A cold rain from the northeast swept the city and a humid wind chilled to the marrow all who were exposed to it. Through the darkness, and splashing wide the mud, went a carriage with a single occupant, that soon left the main thoroughfares and turned into the narrow streets of one of the most depraved quarters of the town.

The driver evidently was acquainted with the locality, for after a few minutes' rapid progress he pulled up in front of a tall brick house and halted. He dismounted, opened the door, and the passenger jumped out, ran swiftly up the steps, and rang the bell. The door opened instantly, as if by the operation of the bell wire, and the man entered and the door was at once closed so speedily that the visitor almost appeared to have entered through the wall.

Within the vestibule was a young woman, a quadroon, plainly dressed, and with nothing to distinguish her from the average servant.

"Is Natalie in her room?" asked the visitor.

"She was in the parlors a few minutes ago."

"Tell her I wish to see her in her room. I will go up there."

"Yes sir."

As the caller passed along the hall to reach the stairway, open doors permitted a momentary glance through the spacious parlors on that floor. The furniture was flame-colored, ornate; and on sofas and gorgeous chairs were seated, or half reclining, several young negresses, black as midnight, and clad, or half clad, in yellow, crimson and purple stuffs. He caught a glimpse of these things as he passed swiftly, and then lost sight of them as he climbed the stairway.

Pushing along two or three passages and cross-halls, as if they were familiar to him, the visitor finally reached a room through whose partially opened door there poured a flood of light. He entered.

“Good-evening, Natalie, I’m glad to find you in.”

“Good-evening, Jean, my son,” was the response in a tone as deep and hoarse as the call of a raven.

It was a woman who received him, and one of the most extraordinary in appearance that even the imagination could create. She was a jet black negress, over six feet in stature, and with a vast bony frame, that showed through where her dress permitted, like the bones of a skeleton. Her face was long, almost grotesquely like that of a horse; her eyes were small, piercing, and black as coal, and nearly buried from view beneath heavy, overhanging brows. Her hair was inky in its hue, with the coarse texture of the mane of a wild animal, and flowed down her back and over her shoulders in a disordered mass. Her nose was of enormous dimensions, long, and like her lips, had no suggestion of African blood. Her mouth was of immense width, and was made remarkable and hideous by the upper teeth which projected far out over the lower lip, and being separated from each other by a little space, presented the appearance of tusks.

She seemed some gigantic and curious animal as she stood there as erect as a stone column.

"Sit down, Jean, and tell me what you want. I know, it is the same as always; you wish a lucky number, or day, or something that you may win on."

It was John Lafarge to whom she spoke, and who remained standing in a despondent attitude before her, with a bent head and a troubled face.

"Yes, all that and more. I needn't tell you what it is; if you can read the future, you can also read the present."

"It is perfectly easy. You are in love, and are disappointed."

Lafarge glanced up with astonishment in his countenance.

"Well, suppose you have hit it, what then?"

"Not much, perhaps. In this cold, foggy region, I can't see into the future as I could in the warm, melting South. My grandfather was a fetich priest in Africa, and when he died a slave in this country, he transmitted the gift to his son, my father, who gave it to me. In the South I was a real priestess and

prophetess. There, destiny could be wooed with the blood of sacrifice. Way up the bayous, deep in the tangled cedar swamps, blood could be offered, and the world be none the wiser for it, nor the loser.

“But here in this stupid North they will not allow sacrifices. Without blood I can do but little. I see only dim visions in the dark.”

She spoke with deliberation and earnestness. There was something awesome in her utterances, her appearance, and her surroundings. The room was furnished in dark shades, and she was in funeral black from neck to heel. Overhead, on the wall, behind a large fauteuil was extended a stuffed alligator, and on other portions of the walls were dried snakes, snails and other fetiches. She believed herself the direct descendant of an African priest of Fetichism, and assumed all the grandeur that she thought the dignity conferred on her.

Taking from a shelf a little wooden image shaped somewhat in human form, she held it to her ear, closed her eyes as if to listen without interruption, and after a little said :

“I am ready. I will write.”

Going to a little table where there were writing materials, she rapidly penned the following, which she handed to Lafarge :

“Monday and Saturday are your lucky days for cards; Wednesday for speculation, and Thursday for lottery tickets. There is no day this month for women. You have a rival. You are in danger.”

He read it, and folding it, thrust it in his pocket, with a fierce scowl.

“By —, you are right! I am in love, and I have a rival; but I fancy that it is he that is in danger!”

“Be cautious, my son. There is a battle between you and another, and I cannot distinguish the victor. Oh, for the blood of human sacrifice to clear my vision!” As she concluded, she ground her teeth till they were flecked with foam like the tusks of a wild boar.

Lafarge soon after left the house, jumped into his waiting carriage and was driven away.

John Lafarge, ostensibly a commercial traveler, was in reality largely interested in gambling. Like others of his class he was superstitious, and was influenced by omens and portents of every conceivable character.

Like other gamblers, both card and board of trade, he was in the habit of consulting trance-mediums, clairvoyants, and professionals who claimed to be able to read the future.

Natalie—"The Ogress," as some called her—was a favorite oracle with Lafarge. She was mysterious, and frequently, either from good guesswork, or shrewd judgment, had given him valuable hints as to card-playing, and operations on the Board of Trade. Whence this strange woman had come, no one seemed to know. There were rumors to the effect that many years before she had been driven from the South for "voudoo" practices, which involved the sacrifice of human life. However this may be, she was a profound mystery whom nobody was able to solve.

Lafarge was not a professional gambler. He had a connection with a first-class house, and gave prompt attention to his duties. He was a successful solicitor, and earned large sums by his efforts. He had, however, acquired a liking for gambling, and when not on the road or engaged in the store he gave many of his spare hours to the infatuation of his passion.

At first his gaming transactions were limited to small poker encounters with other commercial men who happened to meet at hotels in the country. The stakes were small, the risks insignificant, and the entire purpose simply to "pass away the time." What at first was a simple pastime grew slowly into a habit of vast dimensions. It included a fierce desire to gamble on all possible occasions; to bet on horse races, and prize fights; to invest in lottery and policy tickets, and in margins or options in the grain market.

At this time his social standing was good. He was regarded as a rising young man, and was liked and respected by his employers, who perhaps dreamed of a day in the future when the active, industrious and sagacious drummer might have a position as a partner in the firm. He had the entrée into a social circle of a good quality, although it began to be noticed of late that his calls were becoming less frequent, and his attendance at social gatherings were more and more irregular.

In truth, all his hours not employed in business were given to the new fascination. He progressed rapidly from the poker to the faro layout, and in both cases wagered his money with the freedom and *insouciance* of a veteran.

IX.

THE PRETTY TYPE-WRITER.

Among the large force employed by the firm with which Lafarge was connected was a pretty type-writer and stenographer. She was a slender girl about eighteen years of age with the delicate figure and large, soft blue, melting eyes of a Marguerite. There was much speculation among the other employes as to her antecedents, but no satisfactory conclusions could be obtained.

An expression of sadness rested on her handsome features, and gave an additional charm to her attractiveness. She was petite, being scarcely larger than the average child of twelve years of age. She had the appearance of being fragile, and yet she performed all the labors of her position, and endured the long hours of each day's confinement without exhibiting signs of weakness. Her perfect ear retained its pink, and on her cheek there rested the rich crimson of health.

"Who is she?" was a constant inquiry among those who saw her day by day. That she was a Miss Wright, and that she came to the office every morning at ten o'clock and promptly went away at three, and that while on duty she gave exclusive attention to her work, that she was reticent and reserved, were all that was known of her. Where she lived, who were her relatives, and why one apparently so aristocratic and dainty should resort to manual labor, were profound mysteries.

She never volunteered any conversation with those about her, and only spoke when the necessities of her employment demanded speech. She always returned politely and gracefully the morning greetings of the clerks and members of the firm, but on all other occasions resolutely remained shut within herself.

The veil may be lifted that rested on this young and solitary girl. Her name was Eleanor Wright and she was the daughter of an excellent family living in the city. Her father died, leaving a widow, three grown-up sons and Eleanor. There was also an adopted son, who was the offspring of a relative, who

had been taken when an infant and had grown up with the others, and was regarded by them as one of themselves.

The adopted son was the presumptive heir to a considerable property, and in the course of time, it dawned on the ambitious mother that he would make an excellent and most desirable husband for Eleanor.

Eleanor had been reared tenderly. She had the advantages of a select school for children, and of an Eastern seminary for the education and finish of young ladies. She was an accomplished musician, linguist and conversationalist. She was a constant reader, was well informed on current and historical events, a student of men and women, and exquisite in her manners, and amiable in her disposition.

A year or two before this period, her mother one day, when they were alone, said:

“My child, do you know that I am almost fifty years old?”

“Well mamma, you may be nearly half a century old but you don’t look it. Why, do you know that yesterday I met Mr. Wheeler, who saw us at church Sunday and who asked me if we were not twins!”

Mrs. Wright, although fresh in complexion, and well preserved, had some crows' feet beneath her eyes, some silver in her abundant hair, and a very decided corpulence; and yet knowing all these things, she flushed over the compliment, and was as pleased with it as if she had been in her teens.

Women may grow old in their affections, their aspirations and in years, but never in their vanity. A well-turned compliment expressed with apparent sincerity in regard to her appearance will delight the young woman, the matron, and even the grandmother. A woman never becomes too old to be susceptible to complimentary remarks.

"Thank you, dear," responded Mamma Wright, as there tingled through her veins a sensation of downright ecstasy, born of the flattery. "But I did not speak of my age to get a compliment. I was not 'fishing.' I brought it up because it reminded me of your age. Do you know, Elee, dear, that you are past seventeen?"

"Yes mamma, I know it, but what is there very stunning about that?"

"Nothing very 'stunning' if I may be permitted to also speak in female seminary slang.

But you will soon be eighteen, then nineteen, and then—”

“Yes, you are quite right, and you can finish it all up by adding, and so on. But what are you driving at, to use another bit of slang?”

“I am hinting at that which is always near the heart of a mother who has a grown daughter whom she loves, and whom it is her duty to see established in life.”

“Yes, mamma!”

“I have been thinking that you are close to the age when young men will seek you as a wife.” Here Eleanor dropped her eyes, and a soft crimson touched her cheek. “I want to see you settled while I can assist you. I sometimes feel that there is something wrong in me, and that at any moment something may happen.” As she said this her voice grew faint, and tears came into her eyes. Alas, it is always the destiny of a matured woman to believe that something mysterious, unknown, undistinguishable, menaces her health and life.

“I have thought the matter all over,” continued the matron after ostentatiously wiping away the tears, “and I believe that I can select for you the man you should marry.”

“Why, mamma, what do you mean?” asked Eleanor, with her face in a flame, and her gentle eyes flashing with something like anger. “Who is it?”

“It is a most worthy young man, one with good rearing, excellent habits, a moderate fortune, and fine prospects. In short, I mean your adopted brother, William!”

Had a thunderbolt suddenly torn through the house, shattering and rending it from roof to basement, it would not have created more surprise than did this blunt announcement. She stared at her mother a moment as if hysterical, and then sprang up and fled from the room.

A few moments later she was in her own room with her head buried in her shawl, and sobbing with convulsive energy. Thus she lay for an hour or more, and then there came a soft step across the floor, a warm hand clasped her icy fingers, there was an imprint of a kiss on her hair, and a pitying voice said:

“Don’t weep so, my darling!”

Eleanor sprang to her feet, turned her tear-stained face toward her mother, and with her head thrown back defiantly, screamed:

“Marry William! *Never!*”

Nothing more was said by Mrs. Wright for some weeks, and then she again broached the subject. The daughter heard her in moody silence, and finally vehemently declared that if the marriage was ever again mentioned, she would leave the house and earn her own livelihood.

Thereafter she devoted many hours each day to the study of shorthand and type-writing. She learned with great rapidity, and in six months was perfect in the latter, and sufficiently competent in the former to take down with ease the dictation of an average speaker.

She might not have gone, but one day William attempted to take her hand, accompanying the act with some words of admiration. She jerked away her hand, ran from the room, and in a few moments appeared before her mother, hatted and dressed for the street.

"I'm going!" she said. "I shall stay a few days with"—naming a young lady friend—"until I can get work. There is no use in your remonstrating. I am determined, and shall go. I might have endured your persecution, but when William attempts to ap-

proach me, it is too much. I would no more marry him than one of my own brothers."

The mother entreated, and wept. The girl went, brushing a few tears from her eyes as her feet touched the street.

She went to the home of her friend. Advertisements were inserted detailing her wants and capabilities, and in less than a month she had secured the position of correspondence clerk, at a fair salary, in the wholesale house where she first appeared in this history.

The small body contained the soul of a giant. She was remonstrated with by her relatives and entreated to return home, but she persisted in her refusal. She boarded with her lady friend, she earned enough to pay her living expenses, and to purchase such articles of clothing as she needed. She may not have been happy, but she was at least independent, and the mistress of the disposal of her hand and her affections.

X.

JEW AND GENTILE.

When Lafarge returned from one of his commercial trips and entered the office, he was struck by a beautiful figure seated at a desk and engaged in writing. Her superb complexion, her wonderful purple-black hair, so unusual with a blonde complexion and blue eyes, her slight, childish figure and girlish appearance, at once attracted his attention, and his admiration. He had never before in all his varied experience seen anything so sweet, so enchanting in every outline and detail. His dark eyes flashed, his chest heaved, his very soul was stirred to its lowermost depths by this vision of loveliness.

Lafarge was a Jew by blood and education. He was of the more intelligent class, and had received a liberal schooling in the city of his birth, New York. He was a fine musician, and an artist in his tastes, and in many of his

pursuits. He sang a splendid baritone, played the violin and piano, and possessed most of the better qualities characteristic of his race.

The Jew is a sensuous being. He is tropical in his loves, and inherits the oriental warmth of his Abrahamic ancestors, although separated from them by thousands of years.

Each Jew, even of to-day, has the feelings of the writer of the Songs of Solomon; his fervid imagination, his admiration of women, his devotion to the sensuous, his voluptuousness. Even to the modern "Sheeny," whether engaged in selling second-hand clothes or hawking about a basket of pins thread and needles, the woman whom he adores is the perfection of the passionate and the perfect. Could he express himself he would say of her:

"Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks; thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead.

"Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which come up from the washing.

"Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely; thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.

“Thy neck is a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpool in Hishbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thine head is upon thee like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple.

“How fair and pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

“Thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.”

Such would be the utterances of every son of Jacob were his thoughts embodied in fitting measure.

Civilization and progress have much eroded the pure animalism of the chosen people; and yet there still exists a trace of the old, original sentiment which permitted the patriarchs to raid the homes of the heathen for fair captives with which to stock their ample harems.

It is true that among the better elements of the race the virtue of women is esteemed as high as among Christian peoples; and yet there is a class of the type of Lafarge, that does not consider it a mortal sin to assault the virtue of the Gentile woman.

Often when traveling on the cars, for instance, will the blood of the Christian be heated to the point of almost insanity, as he

overhears conversations among Jewish drummers in adjacent seats, who discuss the "Christian girls" with whom they claim to have had liaisons at this or that hotel.

Thin-faced, hook-nosed, swollen-lipped wretches, with converging eyes and cunning, lecherous countenances, are the fellows who thus exchange their amorous adventures, and boastingly allude to their victims as "Christians."

These curs are Jews, and yet they are not Jews. They in no sense represent the better qualities of their race. They are thieves and swindlers in business, debauchees in their relations with women, and a disgrace to their own people, and equally to civilization. The better classes of the Abrahamic race are in no sense inferior in culture, honesty, dignity and worth to the best specimens of other peoples.

The sensuality in the nature of Lafarge was aroused to a boiling point the instant after his eyes saw the girl in front of the typewriter. She was poor, or she would not be engaged in this employment. She was probably alone, for had she brothers or other relatives, they would care for her, and not allow

her thus in the world without protection. All these were reasons which flashed through his mind why she would be an easy victim.

She was a Gentile, and this left her outside the pale of race protection. He was debarred by his blood and his religion from wedding her, although, to his discredit be it said, this thought never entered his soul.

A connoisseur in beauty, he was overpowered by her splendid attractions, and he was ready to fall at her feet and declare his almost insane worship.

He staid in the office settling up his business long after he had ample time to conclude it. He glanced frequently in her direction in hope of catching her eyes, but she never moved her face so that he could have other than a profile view, and which was as clear cut and as shapely as that of a goddess on a cameo. He essayed various jocular remarks, and told some exciting incidents of his late trip, and looked toward her as to discover if she would become interested. So far as he could see, his brilliant efforts, or his amusing ones, affected her equally ; she never paid the slightest attention to either, or showed by a change in her side face that she knew of his presence.

He was piqued, enraged, at her total unconcern, and yet comforted himself with the reflection that in time he would unbend that haughty indifference, and command the direction of those eyes that now gazed as little at him as if he were non-existent.

As a matter of fact she ignored him from sheer lack of interest, and out of respect to her own dignity. She felt that she was immeasurably superior to her surroundings, and determined to have no more contact with them than was rendered necessary by her official duties. Had she been willing, under the circumstances, to take an interest in a handsome, engaging man, she would have found such an one in Lafarge. He was fine looking, intelligent, a good talker, and possessed of a deep, melodious voice. His conversation was bright, epigrammatic, with a flash here and there of both wit and humor.

She neither knew nor cared as to the man who was engaged so long in talking with the proprietor. He might have been a porter or a millionaire, for all that she comprehended. She simply never thought of him at all.

Failing to attract her attention, the audacity of the drummer came to his rescue as it had

in many instances when he had been rudely repulsed by merchants whom he had approached to solicit their patronage.

Starting as if to go out, he passed near her, and purposely stumbled, and so managed to drop forward that one of his hands struck and deranged some of the papers piled on the desk at which she was seated. He recovered himself instantly as she looked up with a slight air of vexation, and with a profound and respectful bow said in his softest tone :

“I beg a thousand pardons! I am inexcusably careless!”

“It isn’t of the slightest consequence,” she answered in an unconcerned manner, as she proceeded to replace the disturbed papers.

“I’m awfully sorry, I’m sure,” he said, and waited as if for a reply. She resumed her labors as if the incident had never occurred.

“By ——!” he ejaculated, “I made her speak, anyhow, and I got a view of her pretty face! My God, isn’t she a beauty! If I’m not mistaken I shall hear more of that sweet voice, and see more of that proud, pretty face.”

XI.

THE BRUTE OF THE HORSE-CAR.

One of the severest trials to which Eleanor was subjected was from the rude behavior of men on her way to and from her business, especially on the street cars. Although generally veiled so as to conceal her face and hair, there was, nevertheless, something in her springy step, and the lithe undulations of her form that attracted the attention of men and women.

There was a class of brutes that haunted the streets, lounged at street-corners, and in front of drinking places, who stared insolently and lasciviously at every pretty woman who passed, who uttered audible and insolent comments on her appearance, and if she were modest, put her to infinite shame as she interpreted their actions to mean that she was vile.

On the street-car this nuisance was re-

doubled in its hatefulness. Seated next to a modest girl one of these animals would annoy her by pressing his knee against her; or standing in front of her, would gaze persistently at her with an insolent and insulting glance.

These lecherous blackguards yet abound. Their existence is a disgrace to human nature. The person who would exhibit an obscene picture before the eyes of a young girl in a crowded street car, would be summarily kicked into the street by the outraged spectators, and yet the cur who, by his glances and actions, conveys libidinous suggestions to the same young girl, under the same circumstances, escapes without punishment. His offence is as gross as if conveyed in actual speech.

Such assaults are never the work of a healthy, robust, virile man. They are the occupation of debased creatures who are compelled to enjoy in imagination that from which they are debarred in reality. Old men are often thus offensive; lecherous old wretches who enjoy in memory the passionate experiences of their youth.

The men who participate in this cowardly

work of annoying and insulting defenceless women, are slender boys, whose self-abasement is apparent in their attenuated necks and dulled eyes; thick-lipped, paunchy, middle-aged men stimulated by rum into desire, and by the same agency rendered impotent in action; and shattered old libertines, long since past the period of their capabilities, and who labor to revive into a flame the long-dead embers of their passions.

One day, Eleanor was detained beyond her usual time at the office by a press of business, and it was not far from midnight when she entered the car to go home. The seats were all taken, principally by men, one of whom, after glancing curiously and fixedly at the slender, veiled figure, rose and offered her his seat. She would have preferred not to take it, but knowing that a refusal would attract more attention than accepting, she took it, thanking the donor as she passed him.

No sooner was she seated than he placed himself directly in front of, and close to her, meanwhile holding on the strap overhead. Then he fixed his eyes on her face, and stared at her persistently with an impudent, salacious expression.

He was a young man with an enormous paunch, flabby jowls, beery cheeks, big hands and feet, and a stupid, leering face. Very soon the passengers began to notice that the young girl was ill at ease. His glance annoyed her, and from her frequent shiftings of position, it was evident that he was otherwise annoying her by pressing his leg against her.

There were two or three women in the car who saw the performance, and who whispered among each other :

“Shameful young thing!” was probably the burden of their discourse. “Isn’t it outrageous that she should carry on at such a rate right here in public?”

“Sst, Tist!” hissed another, “the idea of her trying to get up a flirtation with that gentleman!”

The majority of the passengers became interested in the proceedings. Finally the paunchy persecutor leaned down and putting his face close to hers, whispered something. In an instant, Eleanor sprang to her feet, as if to reach the door, when the big black-guard deliberately interposed his huge body to bar her passage. She flung up her arm

with a gesture of despair, and just then a hand seized the collar of the brute, pushed him backward a couple of steps, and then another hand doubled into a fist, smote him under his vast jaw, sending him in a lump to the floor.

"There, you cursed dog!" said the owner of hand and fist, a blond and rather slender young man, as with face blazing with indignation he surveyed the limp carcass on the floor, and which was making feeble efforts to pull itself together; "I'll teach you not to insult defenceless women!"

The big animal slowly regained his feet and took a seat.

"I wa'n't doin' nothin'," he muttered feebly.

He was a rank coward; he had no thought of resenting the blow, and sneaked off the car at the next crossing. All loafers who thus insult women are cowards of the meanest kind. They may be kicked, spit upon, buffeted, and they will take it all without resistance.

There was some little commotion in the car after the knockdown, but as the cowed wretch offered no protest either by word or blow, the excitement soon subsided. Eleanor resumed her seat, as did her defender. When

she reached her crossing she lifted her veil as she passed him, and with a warm "Thank you, sir!" disappeared. The vision of beauty that for a moment flashed across the glance of the blond young man, dazzled him into almost blindness, and at the same time impressed itself on his memory with a distinctness never to be effaced.

XII.

THE CREME DE LA CREME.

Lafarge, baffled in his first attempts to make the acquaintance of Eleanor, was rather made more determined to succeed in conquering her, by his rebuff. He made various excuses to avoid going out on the road for some time, in order that he might increase his opportunities for seeing her. He was constantly in the office during her hours, and was indefatigable in his efforts to secure her friendly notice. As he was constantly about she could not wholly ignore him, so that in time there grew up a certain, but limited intimacy.

Lafarge flattered himself that he was gaining ground.

One day as she was unpacking her lunch-basket, he happened to be present and said:

“That’s a cold lay-out for this weather. Wont you join me? We’ll go over to the Creme de la Creme”—the name of a famous

and fashionable restaurant—"and have a quiet luncheon."

She hesitated a moment to find some excuse for refusal. She could think of none that she could give him, and concluded with some inward reluctance, to go.

They went over to the *Creme de la Creme* and climbed the richly-decorated stairway, with its showy dado and glaring panels, and entered the public dining-room.

"Let's go further back," said he; "this is too conspicuous." The idea of publicity alarmed her, and so she willingly followed him along a hallway on either side of which were stalls, rising a little higher than the head of a man of average height. They entered one of these; there was a table resplendent with china and silver ware, and there were pictures on the main wall; otherwise there was nothing in the furnishing of the room that was remarkable. Everything was rich, and rather warm in tone.

A luncheon of French dishes was ordered and partaken of. During its progress, Lafarge was at his best. He chatted about French cookery, concerning which he was well informed. He ran over the amusements in

town, and the various artists who were on the boards, and their excellencies. In all these matters he was interesting, and most respectful. Eleanor was carried away by his gossip, his shrewd analyses of characters and persons, and joined quite unreservedly in the conversation.

A deeper light came into the eyes of her companion as he saw her reserve unbending, and she, for the first time, chatting with him familiarly as if they were old acquaintances. He believed that the hour of his triumph was approaching. A species of exultation permeated his voice and his demeanor.

He diverted the conversation to French wines and on this theme he was eloquent. He enlarged on their bouquet, their exquisite purity. There was one brand in particular which was a nectar such as the gods drink. There was but one place in Chicago where it could be obtained, and that was the *Creme de la Creme*. He would order some of it, so that she might sip the most delicious potation which had been ripened by the sun since the days of Olympus.

She made no objection, seeing no reason why she should make any. The waiter was

called, and a card with something written on it by Lafarge was given him. He returned in a few minutes with a bottle covered with dust and cobwebs. He pulled out the cork, when a singular, pungent, and nevertheless delicious and stimulating aroma filled the room. Two crimson and slender wine-glasses were filled by the attendant, and then, when he had left the stall, closing the door behind him, Lafarge passed one of the glasses to Eleanor, and raised the other toward his lips.

"To your health, happiness and our better acquaintance," he said, in his softest tones. Eleanor raised her glass, and just then naturally glanced into the face and eyes of Lafarge.

There was something which she saw, she knew not what, which thrilled her soul with an indefinable terror. She knew nothing of the passions save in a sweet, unconscious way; she knew little of life outside her own limited and pure experiences; and there seemed nothing which she had reason to dread.

Something in his looks alarmed her. It sent thrills along her nerves and awakened a frightful terror. His eyes had taken on a new expression; they shone with unnatural brightness, they were humid; they shifted as

if there were revolving circles beneath the surface; but above all their strangeness and terrible energy, they were fixed on her with a glaring intensity as if they were penetrating her deepest nature. A wave of faintness flowed over her. She was seized by a nameless dread. She put down her glass untasted.

“What! you wont taste this nectar, this extract of all that is poetical in the product of green vineyards and summer skies?”

“No!” she said faintly. “I cannot drink it. I am weak; I must go.”

She glanced apologetically into his face. It had changed. The bright and intense light, the mysterious circles revolving with lightning-like rapidity in his eyes, the fixedness of his gaze all had disappeared, and in their place instead of the expression at once wooing and commanding, there had come one more suggestive of hate. The black brows were lowered and corrugated into a savage frown, the lips a moment before parted with smiling expectancy, were tightly drawn together into a thin line.

She shrunk from him as if with a fear of her life. His look suggested murder, or some horrible danger. She rose and made her way

through the door. He accompanied her, and thence back to the office without the exchange of a word. From that moment she feared and distrusted him. Had she attempted to explain the cause of her dislike she would have failed.

It was the pure instincts of an untainted soul which had alarmed her, and preserved her from a danger she did not comprehend.

It was the next night after this meeting that Lafarge visited Natalie, the Ogress, as before recounted.

It would be unjust to dismiss this incident at the *Creme de la Creme* without comment. The interview between Eleanor and Lafarge in all its details, is one that is occurring every day and night. There are *Cremes de la Cremes* all over the city; some resplendent with rich garniture, fine wines and liveried attendants; and others with hideous, narrow pens built out from the walls, with daubs for ornamentation, with greasy, beer-stained tablecloths, and poisoned beer and whisky handed in by boisterous, profane, ill-smelling waiters.

Unlike as these are in their appearance and surroundings, they are exactly alike in their purposes and their results.

It is said that the woman who hesitates is lost ; it may be affirmed with equal certainty that the woman who drinks at one of these fashionable or unfashionable places is on the verge of ruin, if she have not already passed over its brink.

The shop-girl who dines and drinks under these circumstances finds herself dizzy, semi-unconscious, dazed, in a carriage, and often, a little later, in an infamous house.

Few classes of women are not represented among the victims of these resorts. Many married women, "just to have a little fun," accept invitations to dine with some man at one of these places, and go home late at night with their chastity blasted, and a lie on their lips to account for their detention.

Many of the fallen creatures who secure a livelihood by ministering to the coarse passions of men, can date their descent from the time when they drank their first glass at some one of the *Creme de la Creme* establishments that flourish in Chicago.

XIII.

A WOMAN ENTERS THE SCENE.

After Paul Calkins had spent some months in athletics, dancing and the like, and had visited all the theaters, he became somewhat ennuied, and resolved to enter on some occupation not only to give him something to do, but also to establish a business. In due season he succeeded in purchasing an interest in a book-house, and entered it as a junior partner.

His business location made his hotel residence inconvenient, and he determined on a change. Carefully scanning the advertising columns of the newspapers, he finally learned of rooms to rent, in various parts of the city. One of these appeared to furnish what he needed, and he visited the place.

It was a three-story house on a fashionable street, and bore external evidences of wealth.

He found a small parlor and bedroom ad-

joining which exactly suited, and on giving his bank and book-house as references, he was readily rented them by the proprietress. It was the property of a Mrs. Jackson, whose husband had not long since died. He had been supposed to be wealthy during his life, but when a settlement of his affairs came to be made, it was found that but little more than the homestead could be preserved from the rapacious grasp of the creditors.

Forced to fall back on herself for a support, Mrs. Jackson resolved to utilize her roomy house as a source of income. She had only one child, a girl named Helen, aged about twenty, and possessed of considerable beauty and refinement. The Wright and Jackson families had been intimate for many years; and it was by her friend Helen, that Eleanor, when she had left her home, had been offered a home.

For some weeks Paul came and went without attracting much attention on the part of the inmates of the house. However, he was so punctual in his hours and his weekly payments, so quiet in his occupancy of the rooms, and so polite and deferential to the widowed landlady, that she began to regard him as a

rather particularly fine young man—a conviction that she, of course, communicated to the young ladies.

As Paul climbed and descended the stairway, he now and then caught a glimpse of a dress as its owner went into the parlor, or turned a corner in the upper hall; but for a long time he was not favored with the sight of a face. One morning just as he was opening the street door to go out, a key was inserted in the lock from the outside, and the door was mutually opened by two persons.

Eleanor—for it was she—was returning in haste for something which she had forgotten. They glanced at each other, and then he recognized the girl whom he had defended against the insults of the brute on the street-car, and she saw in him the man who had protected her. Both were so struck with astonishment and so confused that they stammered, begged pardons, and rushed by each other, he with dazed feelings, and she with a blush on her cheek and a throbbing of her heart.

She flew like a sparrow to the room of her friend Helen, burst in on her with a whirl and a flutter, and asked almost incoherently, so much was she out of breath from her speed and agitation:

“Who is that young man that just left the house?”

Helen saw the anxiety of Eleanor, and with feminine tact saw an opportunity to tease, and availed herself of it.

“Young man leaving this house! I’m astonished! How could a young man bear to leave a house in which there are two sweet young things, not to mention a well-preserved widow?”

“Oh, nonsense! Tell me who it was?”

“I think,” responded Helen slowly, as if trying to recall an obscure memory, “that it may have been the plumber’s assistant. Did he have on blue overalls, ragged at the knees—”

“You wretch! It was no plumber’s assistant, but a gentleman, and the same one that protected me against the ruffian on the cars.”

Helen’s manner at once changed, and an expression of satisfaction played over her face.

“Why, you dear girl, that’s mamma’s young man lodger! What a remarkable coincidence that you should both happen to be occupants of the same house!”

“Are you sure?” asked the other.

"Sure as that you stand there with wondering eyes, and mouth open, as if to drink in all the astounding news. My goodness, but isn't this a romance ! It beats everything in fiction !"

Eleanor fled. "I'll be late, good-bye !"

Helen at once communicated to her mother that the young hero who had so gallantly protected Eleanor, and concerning whom they had speculated and chatted for two or three whole weeks, was her lodger.

The elderly lady was delighted with the discovery. She had become very favorably impressed with the quiet and gentlemanly demeanor of the young man, and now to learn that he had performed so acceptable a service for Eleanor, added immeasurably to her estimate of him.

All women admire manly men. They may have an indefinite impression that there is something worthy of respect in brains, and all that sort of thing ; but they much prefer the statue of Apollo or Adonis to that of Ben Franklin, or the crooked-backed Voltaire. The youth who wins a discussion in a debating school, is to them something to be regarded with mixed fear and admiration ;

but a handsome youth whose cheeks are ruddy with health, and whose potent fists can strike to the earth an offensive bully, is looked on with pure respect.

The mother and daughter exchanged their impressions. The former lauded the manners and appearance of her lodger, and the latter reveled in contemplation of his strength and courage. The result was that, Eleanor not dissenting, the hero was invited to call down to the parlor that evening to receive the thanks of the ladies for his meritorious act.

With many misgivings as to his ability to well carry himself in the approaching crisis, Paul betook himself to the salon. The hostess, who was waiting for him, received him very graciously, spoke of the incident on the car, and how deeply she appreciated a service performed in the interests of dear Eleanor, the friend, almost sister, of her own daughter.

The young ladies, tastefully and charmingly dressed, came in soon after, and Mr. Calkins was formally presented to the pair. The usual commonplaces were exchanged, and then there followed awkward breaks of silence.

It is not often that a meeting occurs under similar circumstances, and there are few people who have the tact to know just what to say on such an occasion. Paul felt that he was the hero of the hour, and the knowledge bore him down like a great weight. He wished the occurrence could be forgotten, be passed over as it never had existed. This fact shows the modesty that characterized him. It is something very uncommon in man.

Time passed, and little by little the awkwardness wore away and the conversation became easier and less interrupted. After an hour or so had passed, Paul excused himself and took his leave, with a cordial invitation on the part of the hostess to repeat the call.

It was with wildly-beating pulses that Paul entered his room. Eleanor had fascinated him with overwhelming force. He was lost, confused, like a child that gazes for the first time on some gorgeous spectacle on the stage. He was bewildered, dizzy, and it was hours after he retired before the events of the evening would leave him and permit him to sleep. He had never, in all his experience, seen a woman half so beautiful as Eleanor. Her

wonderful hair, clear and limpid eyes, her melodious and often caressing voice, her dainty hands and slight figure, all united to make of her an irresistible, almost a fearsome attraction.

When he woke in the morning after a feverish sleep, he was conscious of one thing; it was that in his whole heart, soul and spirit, he was enthralled by the beautiful girl.

And Eleanor? It is not to be expected that she shared to any considerable extent the raptures which had affected Paul. She had seen more of the social world than he, and was not so impressible. But she liked him. He had a manly and modest face; he conversed intelligently; he had the appearance of a gentleman; and above all, he was the hero who rescued her when she was in dire peril. All these united, left the young man—not a lover—but an admired acquaintance who could easily become a friend. After that, what? The question presented itself, but she put it away and declined to answer it.

Although young, Eleanor had seen much, and was a close observer. Paul presented himself as unlike any young man she had ever before known. Most of the men who had ap-

proached her when she lived at home were obsequious, full of flattering remarks, often awkward, impertinent, too familiar, and frequently inane and feeble in their conversation.

Paul used no slang ; he was not in the least cringing, obsequious, nor insolent ; while grave, he was not stupid. He had a mine of humor and mild irony at his command, and when he caught the glances of Eleanor, he returned them with a look which, while it expressed admiration, did not fail to embody a high respect. His broad, square shoulders, his deep chest, erect figure, and well-poised head commanded the respect which is always accorded to physical excellencies.

XIV.

TROUBLE IS BREWING.

Lafarge immediately after the incident at the *Creme de la Creme*, went off on a long trip through the Southwest, and Eleanor saw no more of him.

Some weeks passed ; and he returned, reaching the city after business hours. Taking a bath, and having eaten his supper, he concluded to spend the evening at some place of amusement, or at least to drop into one place or more, for a brief inspection of the plays, and more especially, the actresses.

Lafarge was like many other city men, a good deal *blase'*. To engage a seat and occupy it for an entire evening was something too intolerable ; and so, he and others of his kind, would drop in here and there, look over the audience to see who was present, inspect critically the dress and appearance of the heroine of the play and equally critically the

undress of the ballet and the figures of its members.

What a thing of beauty, what a joy forever are some of the daughters of Ballet as they appear under the glare of the footlights, enriched by the high colors of their surroundings! Cheeks glow with crimson glories; eyes flash with supernal brilliancy; rounded forms swell out and curve in unbroken lines of voluptuous beauty, and the tiny slipper scarcely would crush a fragile violet so lightly does it press the floor!

Go around the next forenoon and rap at the unpainted door of a den on the third floor of a tumbling tenement-house. It opens and reveals a broken stove, a small wooden table, a four-legged stool, with one of the members missing, no carpet, a dirty rug, and other furnishings among which is an elderly woman with wrinkled face, pinched mouth, sallow complexion, complaining eyes, and a ragged stocking with a broken shoe encasing the trim ankle and the shapely foot that were so admired the night before.

Such are not always the contrasts between the fairy of the footlights and the denizen of the rookery, but such are the differences in innumerable instances.

Lafarge strolled negligently into several theaters, yawning dismally after he had remained a few moments, and then resolved to go around and spend a few hours in a poker-club. He was turning to carry this resolution into effect when he happened to cast his eye to the upper tier of boxes, and there came over him a sudden change. He rubbed his eyes, stared intently, and as he did so, his breathing grew deeper, the swarthy hue of his cheeks became almost inky in its hue, and his eyes glittered with a malignant light.

In one of the boxes were seated Eleanor, Paul Calkins, and a young lady whom he did not know.

Could all the hatred concentrated in his expression have been launched in a single current on the occupants of the box they would have been struck dead as surely as by the blow of a thunderbolt.

After the performance, the three occupants of the box took the street-cars in the direction of their home. They were happy, chatty, and smiling as they rolled along; but they failed to notice a dark, scowling face which glared at them through the window from the front platform. Nor did they know that

when they left the car for their residence, they were followed at a short distance by a stealthy figure belching oaths and blasphemies, with volcanic vehemence.

When they all entered the house, and the door closed behind them, Lafarge waited. He supposed that Paul would soon take leave of the ladies, and then he would meet him.

Would he murder him? Would he strike him dead in his tracks? Lafarge felt like the commission of any crime. Here was the only woman whom he had ever loved with his whole intense soul, in company, and on familiar terms with the "country-jake" that he himself had been the means of rescuing from the insignificance of the station of a hostler.

The reflection drove him to the very borders of insanity. Unbeliever in Jesus Christ, like the other profane men of his faith, he used His name in a thousand varied forms of blasphemy.

The time passed, and Paul did not come out. Slowly the lights on the various floors were extinguished, and save a dim hall-light, the residence slept in darkness.

Here was another perplexing mystery.

Could it be that Paul was married to Eleanor, or could it be that she had become his mistress, and that this was an infamous house? The possibility was suppressed almost before born. He was too good a judge of faces. The girl with Paul and Eleanor, he knew to be a pure woman, and as such, she would not be a party to any wrong-doing.

He remained moodily and mechanically watching the house till long after midnight; and it was only when a suspicious policeman asked what he was standing around there for, that he moved away.

Late as it was, he determined to see Natalie. Scarcely believing in a God, a future immortality, nor in aught outside the appreciation of the senses, he yet was as superstitious as a savage. In a general way he recognized a deity called Chance, and to whom he paid constant worship.

A strange power this god of the gamblers! Impersonal, without location, unapproachable through prayer, or sacrifice, intangible, and yet everlastingly in the mind of the card-player.

Perhaps a solution of this strange belief may be found in the fact that there is in the

minds of most people a conviction of the existence of some superior power, and which is known as God.

This power is one that punishes evil ; but such is not the God desired by the gambler whose mission is one of unmitigated wrong. To escape the consequences of his acts, he repudiates the God who damns the wicked ; but, unable to rid himself of the belief of a controlling power he changes its nature. He calls it Chance, something that is potent and yet which will wink at a life of iniquity ; whose good will or the reverse can be learned in advance through dreams, signs, and the divination of women.

It is a curious god, this deity of the profession. Its will and intentions are not learned through a written revelation. These are to be discovered through legend and personal experience. If the player is unlucky in his seat, he attempts to placate his deity by getting up and walking round his chair. If one player puts his foot on the chair of another, it is unlucky. Sometimes the erratic god of the sport is induced to lend his assistance by an odd coin, a piece of metal of some kind, or any unusual thing laid in front of the player.

There may be something used to placate, which enrages Chance; if so it is a "hoodoo;" if it is successful, it is a "mascot."

All these and ten thousand other trivialities and absurdities are in use among the worshipers of Chance. They are more stupid than the worship of savages for bits of rags, pieces of stone and knotted sticks. They are calculated for the cult of a class that is without conscience, without a God, without a hope in the future, and with no higher inspiration than greed of gain.

Lafarge found Natalie in her old place, and with no noticeable change in her environment. She glanced at him sharply as he seated himself, and said :

"More trouble, my son. What is it? Have you gambled for a woman and lost?"

"Yes," he responded in a bitter tone, "you told me when I was here last that I have a rival. It is true. I have found him, and what grinds my soul is that he is my own work. I found him and brought him here. I warmed the frozen viper that has stung me! I shall kill him!"

"Yes," said Natalie. "Blood is good. Kill him and we will offer him as a sacrifice. Tell me about him."

Lafarge related all the details concerning his meeting with Paul, his falling in love with Eleanor, the failure of his attempt at the luncheon, and his meeting them at the theater.

"You have the right to be angry, poor boy," said Natalie, in a soothing tone. "You have suffered; you must and shall be avenged. Revenge is taught by my religion, and blood is the only atonement."

"You are right; I will kill him!"

"Not now. To kill him now would be right, but it would be a poor revenge. You are too wise a man to think that the killing of your enemy would wipe out a great injury. You kill him, he suffers for an instant, and then he is dead. He suffers no more. Your revenge can be carried no further."

"What then would you do?"

"Kill him, but not with a sudden blow. Kill him by inches. Let him suffer the pains of death for years. Let him always feel the agonies of dying and yet not die till you give the word."

The words of the Ogress seemed to produce a favorable impression on Lafarge. The frown melted away from his brow, and a smile came over his face.

Till daylight came, the two sat there and talked. When Lafarge finally rose to leave, his face was of a ghastly yellowish pallor, and his eyes deeply shot with blood.

"Is it agreed?" said Natalie, as he was leaving.

"Yes, by G—! You shall have the sacrifice!"

Upon his appearance at the office the same day, he saw Eleanor at her desk and bowed to her in respectful silence. He remained about for some time, and while speaking now and then of business matters, he made no allusion to the visit to the *Creme de la Creme*.

She had been very much alarmed for a long time after her visit to the restaurant, and was disposed to avoid Lafarge as an enemy. But as she came to reflect carefully over all the details of the occurrence, she could recall nothing at which she could really take alarm or offence. Why she had been affected as she was she could not divine. In fine, after a time she began to feel more kindly toward Lafarge and to think that she had treated him unjustly.

His scrupulous politeness after his return; his avoidance of any allusion to the incident at

the luncheon so far affected her that she forgot all her terrors and prejudices against him and henceforth treated him as she had before the meeting at the *Creme de la Creme*. That is, she did not treat him at all as an intimate acquaintance, but the same as she did the manager and other leading employes in the establishment.

Very soon after his visit to the Ogress, Lafarge called at Paul's place of business. He was more than usually polite and affable and made himself especially agreeable.

"I think you are a little pale," remarked Lafarge, as he was about to leave. "You are keeping yourself too close. I must think up something to amuse you. Why you have been here only a year, and are already getting blasé! That wont do! I'll come around some day and introduce some new diversion."

"Thanks! Anything you can propose must be good! Let me know when you are ready."

They parted with an exchange of expressions of mutual good will.

XV.

FRIENDSHIP, MARRIAGE AND LOVE.

It may be readily surmised that the constant association of Eleanor and Paul would result in a warm friendship, even if it should not proceed further.

“Further,” in this instance is not the proper form of expression, for friendship is, beyond question, a higher condition than that termed love. The former is founded on mutual esteem, active sympathies, harmonious tastes; the latter is often no more than an expression of passion. Friendship may, and often does survive marriage, love rarely or never.

So often is this the case that a cynical view of these conditions would lead to the suggestion for the benefit of a woman,—if you wish to preserve your lover, marry some one else. The same advice will apply to the man.

It is unfortunate, and yet it is true that love, so-called, very often dies of a surfeit at

the setting of the honeymoon. Marriage, considered with reference to the protection given it by law, the church and public sentiment, should result in a high state of felicity. If all that it is claimed to be by dreamers, poets and lovers, the union of two souls by matrimonial ties should be the very maximum of human enjoyment.

Ah, this beautiful marriage, what a part it plays in the dreams of the young! The altar crowns the height on which the ideal dwells. Up there, as the young girl climbs slowly from the monotonous vales of childhood, her humid eyes see an unsurpassable glory. It is as holy as was the ground at Sinai. Mysterious clouds conceal somewhat and reveal somewhat of its ineffable blessedness. With springing step, bounding pulses and soul thrilling with she knows not what ecstasy, she ascends, she enters, the glorious cloudland.

There are the fragrance of orange-blossoms, low, sensuous strains of music, and billows of lace that float about her in rhythmic undulations. Superb is she, if never before, at this divine moment. Sweet emotions blossom redly on her cheek; her eyes droop tenderly and languidly with the weight of timid and

blissful anticipations. She clings with a delicious, with a caressing dependence to the arm of her ideal, and then she disappears in the cloudland of matrimony.

Two, five, ten years pass, and one meets the same person, no longer a girl but now a woman. There is no trace of the fair, clinging, crimson-cheeked novice, with step light as the weight of a thistle-down, who knelt before the altar. The cheek is hollow; the eyes with their tender light effaced, have grown hard, steely, unsympathetic. The ripe and rosy lips have become bloodless, and the corners of the mouth over which smiles once played bo-peep with the world, have flattened, and lines, before arched like the bow of Cupid, have become thin, firm, compressed, with a querulous droop in their extremities. Indifference stamps a face once beautiful with mysterious inquisitiveness. Lines have furrowed through the velvety soil of the face, a tinge of sallowness has supplanted the bloom, and something suggestive of satiety has hardened the expression and taken the place of the eager inquiry and innocence which were once so dominant.

And he? What of him? During the love

period, who more chivalrous, devoted, tender, considerate than he? Every moment that he could not bask in the sunshine of her presence was bleak and glacial. How caressingly he held her hands and brushed back the hair from her brow; how frequent the light kisses on her eyelids, and how clinging those on her lips!

With his arm about her slender waist, her fair head on his shoulder, and her glorious eyes looking directly into his, how had they dreamed and discoursed of the future!

Hear them as they murmur softly as the cooing of doves:

"Sweetheart," quoth he, "will you always love me as now?"

"Yes, my own."

"And we will never quarrel, and we will ever be patient with each other; and kisses shall take the place of buffets; and gentle words exorcise all threatening storms?"

"Yes, my sweet!"

"Shall we always be forbearing, loving; shall we be the model husband and wife, who all their lives shall live as lovers and die with unbroken affection and their arms intertwined as we are at this moment?"

“Yes, my blessed!”

We have seen her, a couple or more years after marriage; what of him, the cavalier, the devoted lover?

He comes home disappointed with his business, and brings his ill-nature with him. No kiss greets him at the door. The wife, with her hair in bang-papers, and an ill-fitting wrapper, meets him. He storms at the grocery bills, at the accounts of the dry-goods merchant. The cooking is vile, the house too warm or too cold, there is nothing as it should be. Night after night he stays at the “club, detained by business,” and comes home with a reeking breath, and an unsteady step. Once he would spend every possible moment at her side, and now he spends every possible moment somewhere else.

Where, in these two, does one find a vestige of the once-bright and hopeful lovers? Not a trace of them remains.

Their case is the average one. Its experience proves the truth of the cynic's statement: “If you wish to keep your lover, do not marry him.”

Paul and Eleanor, being human, might commit the same error that is committed by the

majority—that of mistaking a passion for a sufficient basis on which to found a permanent union. Fortunately for them, neither was of a nature to rush to extremes, and to hastily form a conclusion which would last a life time.

They were thrown together a good deal, and found their mental and moral atmospheres to be congenial and harmonious.

They gradually became friends; insensibly they were attracted to each other without effort on their part. Marriage formed no part of their thoughts or lives—at least for a long time. There grew up between them a species of camaraderie that was not based on passion, but on pure regard and sympathy. Without any assurances on his part, she felt that he was her friend, on whom she could depend for her life; and he knew without being told, that she respected him and entertained for him a lasting regard.

This period in their lives was one of courtship, although they did not know it. They were preparing themselves unconsciously for a higher union. Their ideas, tastes, hopes, were gradually being assimilated by association with each other.

Such an intercourse is not perturbed by the interference of troublous passions. Two souls thus communing on lofty spiritual planes are not subject to the disturbances which prevail in the lower atmospheres. They avoid the contact of the fleshly lovers; they breathe an air free from base, stimulating, erotic elements; and are never distracted by emotional anticipations which impair the purity of their affections.

It was not till they had firmly become united as friends that the thought of a closer union presented itself.

"We are friends," said Paul to Eleanor, as the family was assembled in the parlor, one evening. "Don't you think we should always remain so?"

"Yes," replied Eleanor.

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Jackson.

"Why not, of course," said Helen.

"Well, then," rejoined Paul, "I think we should marry."

The remark seemed to cause no surprise in the little circle. For months the mother and daughter had anticipated such an outcome. Eleanor dropped her eyes and made no immediate reply. Paul continued:

“It is not at all necessary that we should marry to retain our friendship. That I believe is so well built as to be indestructible. But friendship is better with its own home. We might be thrown apart by circumstances. Marriage is simply the permission of society for us to live together. As her husband I can assist in her support ; I can relieve her from the drudgery which is now inflicted on her.”

Few proposals of marriage have ever been made in this abrupt manner ; and yet it cannot be said that it appeared thus to Eleanor. Her life and that of Paul had drifted closely together, and for some time had been moving side by side. The proffer of Paul seemed a natural thing under the circumstances. It was only to cement by a form the union which in spirit already existed.

They were soon after this conversation united by the ceremony of marriage. A few friends gathered at the house of Mrs. Jackson, who gave away the bride. The latter was simply attired in a handsome traveling dress. There was no ostentatious display whose splendor would afford a pointed contrast to later, and possibly, wretched surroundings.

The relatives of Eleanor refused to sanction the union, or even to be present at the wedding.

"Eleanor is married, I understand," remarked Mrs. Wright, in the course of a little chat with a sympathizing female neighbor. "The man she married may be all right so far as youth, health, good habits and business are concerned, but he is not in our set. His father was a plain farmer. We had other plans for her marriage, and my heart is broken over her obstinacy. She has made her bed, and she must lie on it!"

Helen Jackson shed no end of tears when the carriage came to take the newly-married couple to the station, but she was somewhat mollified with the promise that the pair would continue their residence in her mother's house.

At the depot they met Lafarge. He congratulated them on their marriage, and fervently wished them a happy journey, not only on their wedding trip, but through life. As the train disappeared from the station, his countenance changed to a demoniac expression, and he muttered through his closed teeth:

"And now it is my turn to deal! We'll see what will be the outcome!"

At the end of a month, Mr. and Mrs. Calkins returned from their wedding trip to their rooms at the Jackson residence. She had become transformed. Her face had lost its prevailing expression of indifference, and now gleamed with a beautiful light. A divine tenderness shone softly from her eyes, and her lips seemed attuned only to the utterance of caressing words.

He too, had changed. His face had grown stronger, more manly, and yet more tender. His tones vibrated with the inspiration of a deep affection.

The friends, without ceasing to be friends, had become lovers.

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PART SECOND.

I.

AN INCANTATION.

It is past midnight, and a strange scene is presented in the room of Natalie, the Ogress. The windows are carefully screened with the curtains so as to prevent the entrance or exit of the smallest ray of light. The gas-jets are turned off, and a dim illumination is furnished by some twisted pieces of cloth which are burning and soaking in a shallow dish filled with some fluid.

These burning wicks emit a yellow flame which distorts while half concealing the objects in the room. A bureau against one side of the apartment is covered with black cloth. A tall wardrobe is hung with the same somber material.

It is a diabolical arrangement, suggestive

only of the sinister, of the demoniac. On a lounge is seated Lafarge, who gazes with curiosity and terror at the figure of Natalie. She stands before the black-draped bureau, on the top of which amidst the dense surroundings of black, there gleams a skull. She has stripped her shoulders of clothing, and is naked to the hips. Her bony form, her flat bosom are hardly distinguishable in the rayless gloom of the room. Her long, mane-like hair falls in a tumbling cataract almost to her feet.

The white gleam of her protruding tusks and the bony glare from the skull accentuate the darkness. She holds in one hand a small, sharp-bladed knife, and in the other a slender branch of cedar.

She regards fixedly the skull with its double rows of large and perfect teeth.

"Hear me, oh father!" she says. "Hear me, the priestess, and thy daughter! Give what I wish! Give me the revenge I seek!"

At this point, with the keen knife she gashes herself on her shoulder, arm and breast. The dull red blood flows over the black skin and covers it with a hideous stain. She drops the knife, seizes a sponge and carefully passes

it over the spreading blood, and absorbs it. Then she squeezes the sponge over a little cup and places the vessel in front of the grinning mouth of the skull.

"Hear me," again she exclaims in pleading tones. "Hear me, oh, my father! It is the priestess, thy daughter, who calls! Grant my wish! Give me the revenge which I seek!"

She remains silent for a few moments staring into the bony caverns where the eyes of the skull once gleamed; and then a menacing look comes into her countenance, and she ejaculates in a commanding tone:

"I have given thee my blood to drink; I, the priestess, thy daughter. Dare not to refuse my request! If thou dost refuse, beware!" and so saying she strikes the skull across the bony cheeks with the branch of cedar.

The worship and the incantation and invocations of the Fetich priestess are ended. She wraps a shawl around her blood-stained shoulders and breast; lifts the drapery and covers the skull, lights the gas and extinguishes the sputtering wicks in the shallow dish. In the strong light, her face is ghastly as that of the corpse of a strangled man; her eyes seem

sinking out of sight in their deep cavities, and her tusks gnaw convulsively her lower lip.

"Go now!" she says faintly, to Lafarge. Pale as death he unlocks the door, and noiselessly descends the stairway to the street.

There may be those who doubt the existence of this horrible class of occurrences in Chicago. If so, it is entertained by people who know nothing of the real nature of the gambler. He is as much a Fetichist as ever was found in Central Africa. He is a materialist the same as the other; he believes in "mascots" and "hoodoos," and like the savage worshiper he honors or curses his Fetich according to the luck he encounters.*

"Fetichism," says an eminent writer, "is conditional. If it insures prosperity, it is highly honored; otherwise it is cast away as worthless."

Who that is familiar with the habits of gamblers has not noticed this phase of worship? If the coin, or the key, or whatever be the Fetich of the player, is accompanied by prosperity, it is honored; otherwise it is cast away as worthless.

In fine, the gambler is a Fetichist, with all

*See Supplementary Notes.

the unbelief, the savagery, the insensate superstitions, the brutal material which the name implies.

A couple of days after the occurrences in the room of the Ogress, Lafarge made his way to the apartments of a clairvoyant. He was apparently determined to spare no effort to secure guarantees of the success of his purpose—whatever his purpose may have been.

The woman on whom he was going to call had a wide reputation among card and grain-gamblers. She occupied a suite of rooms on the second floor of a house on one of the principal streets in the West division.

Entering a narrow stairway, Lafarge climbed to the first floor, and went into a waiting room in which a dozen people had gathered. They were of both sexes, some old, others young girls, some well and others shabbily-dressed. It was to be noticed that in this gathering as in others for the same purpose, certain facial traits predominated. What might be called the average man and woman, was not to be seen. They were variations from the regular type. They wore their hair longer or shorter than most people.

The faces were either longer or more contracted than the common face ; there was an appreciable difference in the dress and the manner in which it was worn.

In fine, an experienced observer would have discovered in an instant's glance that the waiting people differed from the masses. Even where a man or a woman, in clothing, style of hair and the like resembled the specimen, there was some little thing in the glance of the eye, in the arrangement of the lips that indicated aberration—a variation from the regular type.

Those waiting entered another room as they were called by an attendant, who also gave evidence of a variation ; and those who had interviewed the clairvoyant, came out slowly, and went down the stairway. There was infinite variety in their appearance as they issued from the other room. Some wore looks of elation ; in fact, the majority were of this kind. It was evident that one of the efforts of the seeress was to console.

Young girls, especially, were comforted by what they heard. Some of these who went in with handkerchiefs over their eyes, came out with sunny faces.

Lafarge's turn finally came, and he was ushered in. He nodded familiarly to the occupant, and it was at once evident that they were not strangers.

It was a woman above middle age that greeted him. There were no paraphernalia characteristic of sorcery. A plain wooden table, without covering, stood near the clairvoyant, and there was an extra chair for the visitor.

Madame La Blanche, as she styled herself in her advertisements in the daily newspapers, was the "World-renowned clairvoyant," and whose notice further read: "At once know the future; consult Madame La Blanche on love, marriage, divorce, lawsuits, lucky numbers; nativities given, tells whether stocks will rise or fall, and charms and love affairs a specialty."

More concise than grammatical!

The madame was a short, slender woman, with her hair cut very close to her scalp; her nose was thin and pointed, her breast flat, and her general tendency in the direction of bones and emaciation. Her eyes were gray and as bright as polished steel, and her lips thin and compressed, giving her an appearance of seeing everything and telling nothing.

“Well, madame,” said Lafarge, “what have you to tell me to-day?”

She scanned his face for a second with her bright, piercing eyes, and answered, “We’ll see !”

She raised her right hand and swept it across and near to her face. After this had been done several times, her eyes rolled up in their sockets till only the whites were visible, her face twitched violently, her form was convulsed by vibrations; her eyelids closed, and then she sank back in her chair with a long sigh. She appeared to be asleep or unconscious. Then, in a voice, lower, thinner than her own, and very like that of a young girl, she began speaking in rapid tones :

“You are in trouble. You are in love with a beautiful woman, and there is a blond man in your way. You have enemies. You are going on a journey. You will get letters with bad news. Wheat is going to advance. There will be a fall in Reading and Wabash.

“I see some one in the air above your head. It is an old person with long gray hair, and a long, full beard. He is an Israelite, and he seems disturbed. He is gone.”

"It must be my father," muttered Lafarge.

"You are going to be exposed to a great danger. Don't venture too much in unprotected quarters of the city. I see in the air 444666. Don't play lottery till the last quarter of the moon.

"You will be lucky in cards for a month. Don't meet the blond man in a lonely place in the dark."

Here the clairvoyant shuddered, her face twitched, she passed her hand across her brows and hair, opened her eyes, and straightened herself up.

"Was it good?" she asked in her natural voice.

"Not so very d——d good!" was the sharp reply. "I've heard worse, but not much. I'll buy 50,000 wheat, and go 'short' on Reading."

He gave her a greenback, and went away.

II.

PREPARING THE WAY.

One afternoon Lafarge dropped into the place of business where Calkins was engaged. The usual friendly salutations passed between the two, after which the conversation wandered in various directions.

“ You are, of course, enjoying your married life ? ”

“ Oh, yes, immensely. I have a good wife, a pleasant home, excellent health, and a fair business. What more could one wish in this life ? ”

“ No more, to be sure ! I think, however, that there is one direction in which you might find a good deal of enjoyment, and which, in addition, would increase your social importance, get you acquainted with desirable men, and extend your business clientele.”

“ All that is desirable, most certainly. What is the direction you refer to ? ”

“It is that of club membership. The best elements in commercial and other great centers always aggregate their forces, not in a single body, but they crystalize with reference to tastes, business pursuits, and other causes which are harmonious. Already, Chicago is demonstrating its cosmopolitan character by the organization of clubs. As in London, club membership is getting to be the stamp of social and intellectual value.”

“I see no objection to my following the example of other men in this matter. Have you any club that you would suggest as a desirable one?”

“I can’t say, just at this moment. I will think of the matter. I belong to two or three commercial and social organizations, and I will look them over, and see which I can recommend to you.”

“Thanks!”

“What you need is not a membership in some aggregation of antiquarians, or old fogies, fellows with gray hair, or no hair, with spectacles, and who mumble through their gums, and discourse only of antiquities. On the contrary, you are young, and you would naturally prefer association with men

of your own age. We grow old fast enough in the natural course of things; if we can postpone the evil day, we ought to do it. One way to bring it about is to associate with those whose cheeks are red, and pulses bounding with the vigor of youth and health. We are salamanders in a certain sense; we become characterized by our surroundings. In the company of the old we insensibly affiliate with them, and the same is true of the young."

They parted, Lafarge promising to report at an early day the result of his investigations.

That evening Paul communicated to Eleanor the substance of the conversation. She said, after hearing all the reasons advanced:

"I think it would be a good thing for you to join some one of the popular clubs, not only for the reasons given, but for the further reason that I do not believe that a husband can always be satisfied to spend all his time at home. I—"

Paul here interrupted her to say something about the impossibility of a husband, having such a wife as he had, and so comfortable a

home, being in the least anxious to spend any time elsewhere.

She smiled pleasantly, and added :

“I am of course, not experienced in the ways of life, but I have observed much and thought some. It seems to me that nothing could be more injurious to the happiness of a husband and wife than to insist on their eternal companionship. The child does not always cling to the apron string of its mother, but often wanders off for a little freedom, and association with its own fancies. The husband or wife that is made to feel that constant association is obligatory, will soon begin to feel that he or she is wearing a chain.

“I do not believe that the Siamese twins were ever happy in their union. Could they have separated at will, they would doubtless always have remained near each other, but their enforced connection must have been intolerable.

“I should be pleased if you would join some worthy organization. An occasional separation will benefit us both. No husband and wife, however forbearing, kindly-hearted and loving they may be, can stand the test of everlasting contact. Unintermitting famil-

ilarity is sure to breed contempt, as well in the case of many married people as among others."

This gracious and reasonable consent on the part of his wife increased, if possible, his admiration of her broad common sense.

There is a difference in wives.

Mr. Skinner comes home from business. His wife, with deranged hair, an old wrap and a frown greets him with querulous tones. The ice-man is swindling them, there is a leak in the water-pipe, the range wont work, and there is the devil to pay. It is then that Mr. Skinner, tired out with his day's work and ill-tempered over the shape his affairs are taking, sighs for a retreat where there are no defective ranges nor leaky water-pipes.

He ventures some evening when Mrs. Skinner is a trifle less perturbed than usual, to state that he has been asked to join the Jolly Boys' club, and adds with considerable hesitation and an unsettled voice, that he has half a notion to do so.

"You have, have you?" interrupts Mrs. Skinner in a mild and unmistakably ironical tone. "It's just what you need to rest your poor old body, and brace up your shattered

nerves!" Then Mrs. Skinner drops the low, sympathetic key and soars away on her usual high pitch.

"What do you want of a club? Isn't this place good enough for you? You seem to think it's good enough for me. You never offer to take me anywhere! If a club's what a man needs, why aint it something that is the proper thing for his poor wife? How'd you like to have me out nights attending the club of the Jolly Girls and a-coming home at all hours of the morning, whoopin' like a Comanche Indian?

"And where you going to get the money, I'd like to know, to spend in the rantankerous doings of the Jolly Boys! I haven't had a new dress in a year; I haven't got a bonnet to my name—that is fit to be seen on the streets!"

And thereupon Mrs. Skinner bursts into an agony of weeping, and goes into a prolonged period of sulks which are only ended when Mr. Skinner humbly asks her to allow him to furnish the funds for a new dress and bonnet.

III.

A NEST OF HAWKS.

A few days after the club conversation, Lafarge called on Paul, and announced that he had decided to recommend the Hawk club as the most desirable one for him to unite with.

"The Hawk club," he said, "was originally organized by some newspaper men, which, you see, gave it an excellent intellectual foundation. Then actors and professional men were admitted until the club is now the most cosmopolitan in the city."

"That is about the thing I need, I suppose; at least it must be if you recommend it. I'll depend on you for all the necessary steps."

"All right, Paul. I'll propose you, and within a month you will be a Hawk in full fellowship with the brood in the nest."

Within the promised time Paul was proposed, voted on by the directory, elected

without dissent, and admitted to membership.

The Hawk club, as Lafarge stated, was originally organized by some newspaper men. It was about the fifteenth club of the kind which had been formed by the same class of workers, and of course, like all its predecessors, was doomed to financial failure. When the funds in the treasury had all disappeared and ruin faced the club, it was determined to let in some men of other professions who were the possessors of cash.

Some actors—there are some of the fraternity that have saved a few dollars—were first allowed admission, and as the contributions of this new class were exhausted, the nets were again thrown out over a larger surface, and a great haul resulted. In time the Hawks included representatives of almost everything. There were lawyers, editors, actors, Board of Trade men, merchants, clerks, doctors, and in fine, all sorts of people from all kinds of professions.

Its rooms were located on the second, third and fourth floors of a palatial building on one of the principal streets in the South division. Two broad staircases led from the street to the first floor, on which was a series

of rooms en suite, and the parlors, assembly rooms, and smaller apartments for the accommodation of committees, or cloak-rooms, in case of receptions.

The next floor contained a capacious billiard-room, a magnificently decorated bar, and smoking and card-rooms. On the fourth floor was one immense room suitable for dancing parties, theatrical performances, or for any purpose which involved the collection of large audiences.

All the furniture and the decorations were of the best. Costly paintings were suspended on the lofty walls; fine statuary gleamed from the niches of the stairways; expensive carpets and rugs covered the floors, and exquisite panels, finished by the best local talent, emblazoned the ceilings.

All these things were pointed out to Paul by Lafarge, who introduced him to the club, and was showing him the interior.

"Isn't this gorgeous?" queried Lafarge.

"It is, certainly, very," was the response of Paul, who was in excellent humor at finding himself a member of a club which possessed surroundings so opulent and so striking.

"It shows the cosmopolitanism of this

wonderful city," continued Lafarge. "You will meet here every class that has brains, and go; there isn't a fool, an imbecile, nor a nincompoop in the entire club. In fact, they are all hawks, as their name implies. They all have keen beaks, sharp claws, and wing-power that will carry them to the very presence of the sun!"

It was in the nature of fairyland to the new member. A light inundated the room, which was as powerful as sunlight, and yet was modified by colored globes to an agreeable softness. It was night, and the rooms were filled with visitors. The musical click of the ivory spheres of the billiard table came down the stairways; a grand piano in the main salon was surrounded by a half dozen young fellows who, to an accompaniment of one of their number, were roaring an inspiring chorus.

The hum of conversation, and the bursts of laughter rose and fell through the lofty rooms. Everywhere were life, art, beauty. Colored waiters in neat uniforms hurried through the rooms, their black faces and faultless white shirts and aprons affording a pleasant contrast.

"Well, Paul, were you pleased with your experience?" asked Eleanor, as her husband promptly came into the house at 11 P. M.

"I am delighted with the club and its members. The place is a palace; its fittings are elysian; in short, it is a poem in plush, mahogany, and colors. But how have you passed the evening? You did not find it unendurable, I hope?"

"Not in the least. I have read a little, practiced the new song, and spent some time in dreaming. I am not sure," she continued with a smile and a mischievous glance from her eyes, "that I am not more glad to see you now than I would have been had you come at the usual hour."

"Ah, indeed! Then to have you value me as priceless, it might be well for me to remain away several evenings in a week."

"That might result in a reaction, you know; there is a condition which is known as 'too much of a good thing.' However, I am glad that you have joined the club. I know that men like to meet their own kind the same as we. There are times when women have a thousand things to say which can only be developed in the isolation of their own sex."

Paul then proceeded to narrate enthusiastically all that he had seen in the nest of the Hawks. His wife shared his enthusiasm, as he anticipated great intellectual benefits from the eminent men he would meet there, and the other grand advantages which would certainly accrue from his membership.

"I have no doubt at all," she said affectionately, "that you have taken a step which will materially influence your future. That it will be for good, I am sure."

Will her prophecy, or her hope, be realized?

Time will show.

After Lafarge had shown Paul through the club-house, he bade him good-night at the door, saying as the other left:

"Now, old fellow, you see what we have here, and don't forget us. Drop in as often as you can."

Paul readily promised compliance and went away.

Lafarge reascended the stairway to the main floor, and then climbed a narrower staircase to the floor above. Passing through the billiard room, he entered a hallway which led by several rooms on either side and terminated in a door covered with green baize.

At this point no noise could be heard save the notes of the piano from the grand salon, and the metallic click of the balls in the room behind him.

With a pass-key he opened the green door and found himself in a vestibule, or short hall. Three feet in front of him was another door also covered with green stuffs. As he reached this second door a confused clamor came faintly from the other side of it. He applied another pass-key, opened the door and entered a large apartment in which was a score of noisy men.

The room was spacious, and adjoined the main street. There were several windows each of which was curtained on the lower portion so as to permit only a view of the roofs of the houses across the way.

Three circular tables with green coverings were distributed about the room, and at each of these were seated from four to seven men. Many of them were in their shirt-sleeves. Smaller tables were placed about the larger ones on which were beer-bottles, glasses, and other appurtenances of imbibition.

As Lafarge opened the door scarcely a glance met him from the men at the tables. One man saw him and called out:

“Hello, boys, here’s Lafarge with fresh money!”

Dense volumes of tobacco smoke rolled from the center of each table. This, with the shadows thrown by the gas-jets, obscured the air of the room and gave it the appearance of a miniature inferno.

“Here’s a seat,” bawled a man at the table where there were but four players; “come and sit here! The man that’s just left it got broke and we want to break you!”

“All right,” said Lafarge. “Give me a stack!” he called to the attendant. A stack of red, white and blue chips was deposited before him, and the next minute he was absorbed in the game.

IV.

A RATTLING GAME.

It was the poker-room of the Hawk club.

Only the initiated knew of its existence and locality. Staid old members who lounged in the salons, and sipped their wine and chatted, or read the newspapers, never suspected that there was gambling in the club.

It was so remote from the occupied rooms, and so padded on the doors, that the rattle of chips and the voices of the players never reached the other portions of the club.

It was a curious, and to one not accustomed to such things, a bewildering scene. The gas-lights took on a yellow tint in the dense medium of tobacco-smoke, and gave a somber tone to the environment.

A study of the players would afford much of interest. Before each was a pile of chips; some with a small quantity, others with great stacks, thus at once distinguishing the lucky

from the unfortunate. There were changes in the location of these parti-colored representatives of money. Now they were at rest, so to speak, in front of the players, in squads, companies, battalions. The player was the leader in command of each of the forces in front of him.

And now there is a rush of two or three of these privates to the center of the green field. They remain alone for a few moments as if they had selected the position, and were waiting for further events. Suddenly reinforcements begin to advance from the forces on the outskirts of the field. They rush in, some in regular order, with closed ranks; others come pell mell and dash themselves at the central point.

Their variegated uniforms of red, white and blue give them a picturesque appearance. They are like gaily-dressed soldiers, gathered for a holiday observance. As they cluster about, with the background of green, they please the eye, and seem filled with a species of animation, a sort of still life.

"The combat deepens! On ye brave!" Suddenly there is a charge from the main bodies lying around on the outskirts. They

rush to the center, they hide the green with their masses. And then the combat ends. The victorious leader who has captured the struggling hosts, marshals them in front of his standard, his tent. And thus the contest momentarily ceases, to be again resumed at short intervals, and with ever-varying results.

Not the least curious phase of the playing is the attitudes and expressions of the players. Some of the faces are flushed with alcohol, and some of the eyes are shot with blood. Others are pale or sallow, and on the countenances of all is fixed an expression of eagerness, of intensity. Each is absorbed in the play as if he were a surgeon engaged in tying up an artery whose results would be deadly were he for a single instant to turn his attention elsewhere.

Other faces reveal satisfaction; on others there is a drawn appearance as if some power like the Spanish rack had lengthened out the face, and left it filled with long, slender, concave furrows. Here and there is a man whose body sinks listlessly in his seat, and whose countenance is eloquent with suggestions of rage and defeat. Most of the players, when their hands are free, incessantly

fondle their chips, piling them by dropping one on the other from a little height, or with the fingers of one hand, running two adjacent piles into one so that in the process each alternate chip from the two piles will pass in, one above the other.

He who can thus "butt in" chips is to be avoided. It is a certain evidence of long experience in gambling, with the probabilities that he is an expert professional gamester.

The words that issue from the lips of the players mainly relate to the movement of the game.

"It is your ante;" "Come up;" "I raise that;" "I see you;" "I pass;" "It's a jackpot;" "I open it;" "I stay;" "That's good!" "Take your foot off my chair!" and dozens of other terms peculiar to the game, fly about without cessation. Intermingled with these technical utterances, one catches often the sound of a savage oath, an expression of disappointment, and which not unfrequently is attended by some epithet too vile for written expression.

Now and then a player with overcast face throws down his cards, and with a string of imprecations leaves the table. He may have lost

the last dollar which stood between him and the starvation of his family, and the fact may be well known to the men who have won his money, and yet from not one of them is there an expression of regret, or condolence. Such occurrences are regarded with brutal indifference.

"The damned sucker is broke again!" is probably muttered by some player as he scans his cards, when the door closes on the despairing victim. And that is all.

Something of the haste, the scramble, the voracity, the ravenousness of starving swine feeding out of a trough is suggested by the demeanor and acts of a table of gamblers.

The dominant types are usually the same. There is the paunchy player, with cherry cheeks, enormous hands, thick lips, bulging eyes, and labored breath. There is a pock-marked person, dull, silent, save when now and then he launches a vehement blasphemy over his ill-luck. There is generally a youth of nineteen, perfectly-dressed, with an incipient moustache, hair parted in the middle, and who smokes cigarettes. There is always a "board-of-trade" man, who talks, when opportunity offers, of July wheat and September

corn. There is also a bluff, unkempt farmer-like man, with stubby fingers and uncleaned nails. In nearly every game accessible to the public, there is one person with long, slender fingers, a hooked nose, an imperturbable face, and keen eyes that scan every movement of his companions.

Drinks become frequent, faces redder, eyes more blood-shot, tones louder and now and then menacing, the lines about the mouth deeper, the fumes of the atmosphere more intolerable, until the early dawn comes and peers over the curtains, and sees a frightful yellowish pallor on the countenances of the players. At this point Lafarge rose, and left the game. Two others stopped play at the same time. Lafarge beckoned them aside.

"See here, boys, I want to speak to you a moment, on the quiet."

They passed into a corner of the room, and conversed in low tones.

"What I want to say is this," explained Lafarge. "I have a friend, a very nice gentleman, who is fond of draw, but who does not care to play in a semi-public place like this. He has plenty of 'stuff,' and will 'bleed'

without squealing. I want to make up a party of four to meet him, and they must be nice gentlemen—at least in manners and appearance,” he added, with slight contraction of an eyelid.

The two to whom he spoke readily agreed to the scheme, and two other names were mentioned as men desirable to complete the party.

“We will all meet at the club in the salon, one week from to-night. We will meet there as if by accident, and I will bring my friend. We will become acquainted and chat and smoke awhile, and a suggestion as to a little game to pass the time, can be made. I will have one of the private card-rooms of the club all in readiness, and we can adjourn to it without notoriety.”

“That scheme ought to work, sure,” remarked one of the listeners.

“You bet it will,” said the other, and they separated.

It was many hours after daylight before the poker party had all gone. The winners left at various periods in the game, and the losers remained to combat each other in a desperate endeavor to reduce their several losses.

Three men outstayed the others, and then one of these was soon forced to leave by his business, and then the two alone remained. It was nearly noon when with feverish pulses and throbbing veins, the two left the tobacco and whisky-poisoned atmosphere, and crawled away.

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V.

THEY GO A-FISHING.

Paul Calkins was promptly at the club on the evening when his arrival was expected by Lafarge. He had decided to give one evening each week to the Hawks, and determined to be at home as early as eleven o'clock.

On this second visit he found Lafarge in the main salon, in conversation with a gentleman—the latter a rather fine-looking person, and well-dressed. Lafarge beckoned Paul to join them, which he did, and was introduced to the stranger, Mr. Evans, a “Board-of-Trade man, “a member of the club,” Lafarge added, “and a particular friend of mine whom I'd like you to know.”

En passant, it is odd as to the importance and extended utility of “Board-of-Trade men” in the make-up of games of poker. The stranger, or neophyte, who is invited to join a game, when he inquires as to who com-

pose it, is always informed that it is made up of "Board-of-Trade men." It seems to be the impression that this designation is a guarantee of respectability, of perfect integrity, and especially of entire fairness in card-playing.

The exact value of this class of recommendation is not "listed" in any of the authorized quotations of moral values, and hence, it is impossible to state just what it is really worth in the markets.

The trio chatted for a little while on club matters and affairs in general, when they were joined by the other young man to whom Lafarge had spoken at the close of the last week's poker-seance.

"Draw up a chair, and join us," said Lafarge as he shook hands with the new-comer. "Mr. Easton, you should know my friends. This is Mr. Calkins, and this is Mr. Evans."

As is the case always, each gentleman was very pleased to meet the other gentlemen, and shook hands with as much fervor as if they were really delighted to make each other's acquaintance. Messrs. Easton and Evans, the same two with whom Lafarge had concerted the meeting, were more than de-

lighted to become acquainted. Each remarked that he had often heard of the other, and had often wished to have the pleasure of meeting him. Each winked at his *vis à vis*, as he said this, and appeared to think it a great joke.

Some refreshments were ordered, cigars were lighted, and conversation flowed smoothly on. After a little, Lafarge took advantage of a break in the talk to say to Easton:

"Do you ever amuse yourself in any game of cards?"

"Very rarely. I sometimes play a little whist, and now and then a game of cribbage."

"Don't you ever indulge in draw?"

"Well, yes, I have once or twice, but I don't know anything about the game."

"How is it with you, Evans? Do you play anything?"

"Oh, now and then euchre or some mild thing of the kind."

"As to you Paul," said Lafarge, "I know what you can do, as you were one of my pupils. What do you say, gentlemen? Shall we go up stairs and have a game of something to kill time?"

No one objected. Paul said, "Of course." The others said, "Anything that suits the rest, suits us."

On the upper floor, in the billiard-room, Lafarge shook hands very cordially with a man who was watching a game of pool.

"Come along," said Lafarge, "we are going to have a bottle of beer."

The stranger consented, and the party then proceeded to one of the small rooms off the hall, and which could be used for serving refreshments, card-parties, or private interviews.

"What'll the game be?" asked Mr. Evans.

"Whist!"

"Cribbage!"

"Draw-poker!"

"Don't care!"

These were the answers. Lafarge had suggested whist, but the man who had joined them in the billiard-room insisted on "draw," as he termed it.

Such was finally the decision of the others, and thereupon the table was arranged, cards and chips produced by an attendant, and the players seated themselves.

"I can't stay long," said Mr. Easton.

"Nor I!" came from two or three others.

This is the regular formula which precedes a game of poker. The person who utters it really means that he purposes to leave the game whenever he is the winner. He does not say so, but that is what is intended. If he should be a winner, and should start to leave, and any one should plead with him to stay, his answer would be, "I told you when I sat down that I couldn't stay long. I have an engagement and must go."

The play began, and proceeded without interruption. All were well-behaved gentlemen, who took with coolness their losses and gains. Lafarge had well selected the players. They were of the kind that would not offend the ear with blasphemies and ribald conversation.

Paul entered into the game with interest. The room was comfortable and quiet, the players were gentlemen, and fortune seemed to favor him from the start. He won small amounts, was cautious, and in time was a substantial winner.

Time passed noiselessly and without friction. One of the players glanced at his watch.

"What's the hour?" indifferently queried another.

"Half-past eleven!"

"Half-past eleven!" repeated Paul. "Great heavens! I was due at home at eleven! I must go!"

"It's a good time to go!" said Mr. Evans, with a trace of irony in his tone, as he glanced significantly at the accumulations of chips in front of Paul.

The latter felt the jeer of the other as if the thrust of a dart. He hesitated a moment, and then said:

"I'll play half an hour longer, and then I must go."

Luck turned against him and he lost, although not much. Absorbed in his efforts to stem the tide of ill luck, he forgot the passage of time. Suddenly the matter occurred to him, and with a start he pulled out his watch. It was after one o'clock!

He at once settled his game, bade the players good-night, and left.

"Well, what do you think of your new man?" asked one of the players of Lafarge.

"He's panning out all right. You don't expect to strike pay-dirt right on the surface,

the first blow you make with your pick, do you? Give him time."

As eleven o'clock approached Eleanor began to expect her husband. The hour came, and as an occasional footstep sounded on the sidewalk she thought, "That is he."

Half-past eleven came and went, and then midnight, and still no husband. She had retired to her sleeping apartments and was alone. The delay began to annoy her. What could detain him? It could be nothing less than accident. A subtle apprehension of approaching evil vibrated through her, but took no tangible form. It was the more terrifying that it was unformed and undistinguishable. He had been attacked by footpads and she saw his prostrate form, bleeding and helpless! Her memory brought up cases she had read in the newspapers of men who had been waylaid and thrown into the turbid river; and of mysterious disappearances of citizens who had stepped from their homes to be gone an hour or so and of whom no trace had ever after been found.

All these horrible visions came into her presence in the still night, and mocked her with their threatenings. Although high-

spirited and possessed of extraordinary independence, as must be known by those who have read her history, she was, nevertheless, acutely sensitive. She shivered with pain at the slightest blow.

Thus sensitive, and with a powerful imagination, she conjured up phantoms as she sat there, whose jibings drove her almost insane. Wounded, dead, dying, mutilated, floating beneath the black waters of the river, she saw constantly her husband.

Her head pained her, and she unbound her hair to secure relief. Her eyes were wetted with tears like a violet with dew-drops. Her baby-mouth was contracted with suffering, and the lips were pinched across her teeth.

And thus, with her long, purple-black hair falling down her back and breast, she looked like an infant Niobe wrapped in a cloak of mourning.

It was this picture that greeted Paul when, with fleet footsteps, he flew up the stairway and opened the door of her room. She had shrunk in the corner of a large easy-chair, and lay there cold, shivering and helpless.

Paul raised her tenderly in his strong arms and held her sobbing form to his breast.

"Oh, darling, you are not dead?" was all that she could utter with her broken voice.

"No, no! I'm safe and you are in my arms."

He lifted her from the chair, seated himself with her across his lap, and placed her head tenderly on his shoulder. The blue eyes opened to their full extent, glanced apprehensively into his; then their expression changed to one of joy and trustfulness, and the lids with their long lashes settled slowly down on her cheeks. She "cuddled" closer to him, threw one arm across his breast and fell asleep.

For hours Paul held her in his arms fearing to move lest he should disturb her slumbers. At first heavy shudders ran through her frame, and a deep sob here and there interrupted her breathing. It was the swell after the tempest. In a little time, with long-drawn, even breath, with her white face as placid as marble, she lay like a sleeping infant on its mother's breast.

The sun glanced into the room in the morning and saw Paul carefully bear his burden to the bed where he placed it, wrapping it about with a shawl, and then stretch himself beside it without disrobing.

VI.

TEMPTER AND PRIESTESS.

A couple of days after Paul's evening in the gambling-room of the Hawks, Lafarge, at the usual after-midnight hour, visited Natalie.

She was found in her room sitting in a large arm-chair, with a placid expression on her face—that is, placid in comparison with its usual stormy character. She glanced at Lafarge and said, after a close examination of his face:

“You look happier, my son. Has fortune favored you?”

“Yes, maumee,” a familiar address which he applied to her in his good-natured moments; “yes, luck has favored me to some extent, and the future is full of promise.”

“It was the blood that has done it. I knew that this was all that was needed. Do you see?”

Lafarge admitted that the connection between his good fortune and her sacrifice was a palpable one.

"Tell me," said he after her excitement over the announcement of his bettering fortune had subsided, "why do you use sacrifices in your worship?"

"Because it was done by my father, who was a priest of Fetich, and by his father, and so on by all the long line of priests and priestesses back a thousand or ten thousand years in Africa. Then the Fetich demanded human offerings, and bodies were cheap and sacrifices plenty. Then was Fetich powerful, and mighty monarchs knelt at his feet.

"My father's great grandfather was a Fetich priest and was stolen and brought here as a slave. In secret he kept up the worship of our deity. In the deep swamps was his altar, and now and then a wandering piccaninny was caught and offered for sacrifice. The freedom of the poor slaves was a cause for which my father labored in secrecy, and in the hours of darkness. Many is the wench who gave her life to aid in supplicating Fetich for the deliverance of our enslaved people."

"Is the skull of your father a real Fetich?"

“Yes. It can bring us good and bad fortune as it wills. Its wishes must be respected. It has hunger, and must be fed; it has thirst, and must be satisfied.”

Much more did this savage old woman communicate to him in regard to the mysteries of Fetichism. So earnest was she, so impressive in her gigantic stature, and so emphatic in glance and gesture that the superstitious nature of the gambler-element in her listener was awakened to an extent that almost led him to become a firm believer in the potency of Fetich.

He learned that her mother was a quadron of French parentage on her father's side, which fact would account for the peculiarity of her hair, and the absence in her features of marked African characteristics.

“Give me the Red Sacrifice,” she said as Lafarge was leaving, “and you shall have all that your heart can desire.”

“I think,” he said with an expression on his face of gloomy introspection, “that I can foresee a time when I shall be able to gratify all your wishes.”

The Ogress, as soon as the door was closed on her visitor, put the black cloth over the

bureau, dropped the curtains, brought out the skull, and laid it in place on the improvised altar. Then into a saucer she poured a powdered substance to which she touched a piece of burning paper. The powder burned slowly and gave out little clouds of vapor that filled the room with an aromatic, pungent odor. She passed the smoke again and again beneath the nostrils of the skull; and then in an impassioned voice, said:

“Good father, thou hast heard thy daughter, the princess! Thou hast listened to her cry for help! Thou art good, oh, my father! Thou shalt have food and drink in plenty! My nostrils inhale the odors of gurgling blood, and my ears hear the cry of the victim! Thou art good, and I, thy daughter, the priestess of Fetich, love thee!”

And then changing her language to French, she chanted in a low, hoarse tone:

“By the blood, by the censer—arise!

“I have given thee cymbal and song,
Much praising with censer and knee;
Such scent of sweet blood for so long,
Shall no reward follow from thee?

“Wilt thou list to the drone of my hymn
And glaze thy dull eyes to a stare?

Wilt thou bring me dark days for a whim,
And send as a handmaid, despair?"

She bowed her head on her folded arms as they rested on the altar close to the skull and seemed to sleep. Daylight penetrated dimly into the room, giving the black woman the appearance of some gigantic creature of darkness.

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The extraordinary exhibition of sensitiveness by Eleanor on the night of his absence from home, very much surprised as well as annoyed Paul, who had estimated her to be a woman whose singular independence would sustain her under any circumstances, however distressing or unfavorable. The fact that she had left her comfortable home, had engaged in the labor of supporting herself, and married him against the decision of all her relatives, had led him to think her a woman who would yield to no adverse conditions. Meanwhile, however, he took much blame on himself, and made a solemn vow that nothing of the kind should ever occur again.

Women are a fragile, complex, delicate piece of mechanism. It is most difficult to construct general rules, or to establish deductions

that will apply to all, or even a considerable number of them.

A man is machine-made. He is like a modern watch, any one piece of which will fit any other time-keeper from the same manufactory. The woman is hand-made, so to speak; each part of her has reference only to her own mechanism, and will not fill the same place in any other feminine machine.

The machine-made watch may be dropped, jarred, shaken up and not injured; the reverse is the case with the more delicate works in the other. The slightest blow will often seriously derange its mechanism, and produce disastrous results. Whatever may be the apparent dominant quality of a woman, it is subject to constant variation from the action of subordinate causes, and which are mainly emotional in their nature, and originate in her sex.

She has periods of exaltation and depression concerning which men, by their own experience, know nothing. There are occasions when she weeps without apparent reason; when she suffers agonies from intangible causes, and which, she herself does not always comprehend. Often men witness

these developments with brutal indifference, not unmingled with contempt. . They fancy that these alternations, these extremes of enjoyment and suffering, these frequent depressions are the results of the imagination, of whims, of unstable character. And thus it is rarely the case that the unhappiness of a woman is appreciated by the other sex.

Prominent among the causes which influence women, and mingle grave perturbations in their lives are those mysterious agencies connected with prospective maternity. It is during this period that the woman often becomes fitful, exacting, incomprehensible. It is then that, more than during any other period of her life, hysteria, with its complications, its obscurities, takes possession of her.

Tears, exaggerated laughter, frantic sobbings, derangement of the emotional functions, all these assail her until her life, at times, becomes an intolerable burden.

Yet when the hours are not afflicted with these disturbances, the gestation period is one of supreme enjoyment.

All the beautiful possibilities of a future are unrolled before her. Her dreams of what may be, fill her with lofty exaltation. She

contemplates the approaching ordeal with a mingled feeling of joy, apprehension and sorrow. She must suffer ; she may lose her life in the struggle, and yet so powerful and peculiar are the maternal instincts that she is willing to encounter any danger for the life of her unborn babe.

Three months after the night scene recorded, Eleanor lay on her couch, white as the snow, with feeble breath, with her blue eyes filled with an expression of divine tenderness, and by her side, next to her heart, a tiny babe.

It was a violet bud which had drifted ashore from the unknown sea which encompasses life.

Long ere this event had Paul found the solution of the mystery connected with the condition of his wife, on the night of his return from his first visit to the gambling-rooms of the Hawk club.

VI.

THE FISH TAKES THE HOOK.

Haunted incessantly by the vision of the tearful and appealing face which he met on his return, at so late an hour from the Hawk club, Paul determined never again to visit it. As time passed his regret somewhat subsided as he discovered the real cause underlying the hysterical condition of his wife.

Nevertheless, he did not go to the club, his time being taken up in devoted attention to her during the period of her maternal crisis.

A couple of months or so after he found himself the father of a girl-baby, he received a call from Lafarge. That gentleman had been absent on a long trip and had not seen Paul since meeting him on the last visit of the latter to the Hawk club.

"How is it," asked Lafarge, after the conversation had drifted for a time on the

weather, health, and other commonplaces, "that you no longer go to the club?"

Paul gave as an excuse the condition of his family affairs and the absolute necessity of his spending all his spare time at home. Lafarge, with a genial smile and a cordial shake of the hand, congratulated him on the accession to his family.

"Well, now that a baby is born, and mother and child are doing well, I suppose you will honor the Hawks with your occasional presence?"

"I am not altogether certain that I shall continue my membership. I am now the father of a family, you know, and ought probably to give my entire spare time to domestic matters."

"Nonsense! Are you going, at your age, with all your qualities at their very prime to settle down as a domestic drudge, and coddle the baby, feed it its pap, and clean its nose? Why, man, you have seen nothing of life! You are like an Aladdin who penetrates as far as the door of the enchanted cave, who sees all the treasures spread out before him, and then deliberately turns around, abandons everything, and goes home to continue to be the slave of his mother."

Paul was somewhat abashed at this outburst, and stammered :

“Aladdin might have done worse than waiting on the old woman—”

“But that is not all there is of this matter. Your honor is more or less involved in it. You remember that the night you played at the club, you took away some of the ‘stuff’ belonging to the other gentlemen and myself. Now, so far as I am concerned, it does not make any difference. We are old-time acquaintances and I understand just how you are situated. But it is different with Easton and Evans. They have asked me several times as to what had become of that slick-looking stranger whom I introduced to them, and inquired with some sarcasm, if they are never to have an opportunity to get their money back?”

This was an entirely new view of the situation to Paul.

“Ah, yes, I see! That puts a different phase on the matter. Of course it doesn’t look just right for me to go in there, make a winning, and then not show up to give them opportunity for revenge. If you can get them together, I shall be happy to have a return game any evening ”

“That’s right, old fellow! I knew if you once understood the situation you would do the right thing. So long! I must go.”

When he reached the street, he muttered, “A baby? So much the better! The more the merrier!”

In reality Paul was in his inner soul pleased that there had been offered an excuse to repeat his visit to the club. The wonderful fascination of gambling had already made itself felt in his disposition. He was not wholly possessed by it, for it rarely seizes its victims at once. It is slow and insidious in its approach. It commences its work as lightly and delicately as the fiend, habitual drunkenness. In the case of the latter, unless the result of congenital taint, the advance of the novice from an occasional sip of the exhilarating bowl to the fiery draughts of perpetual inebriety, is generally a slow one. Men do not become drunkards nor gamblers in a night.

Ah, no! It is a picnic at the starting of the procession; it is a long time before the pilgrims reach the hell to which they were surely destined from the very start.

When he went home that evening, and in

connection with his wife, had held a love-feast over the baby, and had admired its puny fists, its minute feet, its mite of a nose, and its chubby little cheeks, Paul related to his wife the substance of the conversation he had that afternoon with Lafarge.

"I had made up my mind to drop the Hawks altogether, for I am happy enough at home, and especially so since this speck of a woman," here he looked fondly at the bit of humanity in the arms of his wife, "has come to stay. But it seems to me that there is something in what Lafarge says, and that I am due to give those gentlemen a chance to win their money back."

"I think you are right, and I wish you would go. Baby and I can get along for a night in a week very well, can't we, missie?" she said, as she gazed passionately into the face of the infant.

There was a faint "goo" from baby's lips, which might, by a fond and partial parent, be regarded as an affirmative answer.

Eleanor had none of that congenital horror of cards which possesses so many women. She had not been taught as a child that they were harmful. In addition to this, her nature

was pure and unsuspecting. She saw no evil in gentlemen playing cards for money. She did not fear that her husband might be contaminated by evil associations, for the reason that she did not know of their existence. The wounds, the cicatrices on the social body she knew nothing of, as her attention had never been called to them. To be sure, she had heard of fast women and men, and of many others of the sinful people and things, but they impressed her very much as do the visions one has of the figures, habits and lives of the inhabitants of other planets—dim, undefinable and remote.

Thus informed and educated, she found nothing against which to object in Paul's conclusion that he would resume his visits to the club for the purpose, in part, of giving the players their revenge. In truth, she regarded it as only a fair and manly decision.

With her full consent he resumed his visits to the Hawk club. The grade on which they had married, that of friendship, still carried them smoothly along its lofty level. She believed in him without any questioning, as freely as the soil drinks the dew. That he wished to take any course of action was an ample reason to her why he should take it.

One night in each week found him in the private room which he had first visited, and always engaged in playing. Almost always Lafarge was one of the players; sometimes there was a change in the personnel of the game, and the places of Easton and Evans were filled by recruits. These changes were always managed by Lafarge. He selected the men who were to fill the vacant spaces.

All the men whom he thus furnished were gentlemen in appearance and demeanor. They never exhibited anger over their losses, nor undue exultation over their winnings. So far as appearances were concerned, it seemed a "gentlemen's game."

The results of the play fluctuated. Some nights one or two of the players would win, and now and then one man alone would be the victim. For a few weeks Paul was fairly fortunate, and he usually left the table with more money than when he sat down. He had established an understanding with the party that he should be excused from the game at an hour which permitted his reaching home before midnight.

His attachment for the game had grown during this period, and being a regular win-

ner, it seemed a profitable as well as a most enjoyable diversion.

One evening he won considerably at the outset, and he felicitated himself on the prospect of securing a substantial addition to his gains. Then the luck suddenly changed. Strong hands which hitherto had been victorious, were now beaten. Irritated at this turn in his luck, he endeavored to recoup by larger bets. The more vigorously he pursued this policy, the heavier his losses. Soon all his winnings in the early part of the game were lost, and then followed a demoralizing rout. He lost and lost till the hour came for his drawing out, when he found he was a thousand dollars loser.

Of course he had not that amount with him, but his checks were good. One of the players happened very singularly and opportunely to have checks issued by the bank with which Paul did business, and these were promptly produced when the hour for settlement came.

"That's very odd," remarked the owner of the checks, when he found that Paul and himself were depositing in the same bank. "Do you know old Sanks, the president?

I've known him ever since he opened the Thirtieth National, and he has always carried my pile since he began banking. An accommodating old chap, too; he'll discount my personal note without any collateral, for five or ten thousand."

The gentleman who thus vaunted his familiarity with the president of the bank, and his ability to secure unlimited discounts, was a salesman in a shirt-store, on a salary of twelve dollars a week.

Paul went home that night with a half-pain in his heart. He had been elated by his success, and he hated to lose. All that night thoughts and dreams of the game haunted him. He recalled situations in which he held the best cards at the beginning of a deal, when a card falling his hand would have made him invincible, and which he failed to get, while some player with substantially nothing to begin with, had "come in," bettered and won. Why could not fate have given him the needed card at that critical moment?

In his sleep, he cut, shuffled and dealt; he tried to fill impossible flushes, and to better two-pairs, and was always baffled. He found the next morning after his first losing, the most unsatisfactory of his life.

As the sun came up and the prattle of the infant was heard, he shook off his despondency, and with something of a revengeful spirit animating him against the men who had beaten him, he cheered himself with the thought that at the next session he would recover his losses, and punish the people who had won his money.

However "gentlemanly" the game, a loser, at least at the time of playing, is very apt to entertain a personal dislike for the man who has been the main winner of his money.

VII.

HAWKS AND DOVES.

Paul continued the game with varying fortune. Now he made a small winning, but as a rule he lost. He began to be irritable and suspicious; he saw no reason why he should be a constant loser.

"Suppose you try the other game," said Lafarge, to whom he communicated his discontent. "It is a larger game as to the number of players, and new men are coming in all the time. It might change your luck."

Paul availed himself of the suggestion, and was supplied with a pass-key to the main card-room.

In this room, at some hour during the twenty-four, there would be met all the toughest elements of the Hawks. An almost perpetual orgy prevailed in which gambling and intoxication were the dominant features, and which in intensity, and often in indecency,

put to shame the frantic revelries before the altars of Dionysus. There were many cultured gentlemen among the members, but they rarely penetrated further than the billiard-room in their journeyings through the club-rooms.

The fast element was recruited from no particular class. It was composed mostly of young men, although among the most rapid of the lot, bald heads and gray hairs were not without representation. All professions and occupations had sent delegates to this branch of the Hawk club.

They gambled heavily and drank to the dregs the deepest of bowls. All seemed to have plenty of money which they flung out with unsparing lavishness. They dined at a French restaurant, and ate the costliest of food and drank the most expensive of wines. Coupés called for them at any hours of the day or night, on the touch of an electric signal, and well-trained and obsequious servants stood ready at the club to attend to their lightest wishes.

Glorious days were these for the gilded youth of the Hawk club! Each night was the occasion for a festival to Bacchus, to Cyp-

rian rites, to the universal genius of Dissipation.

In the late hours of night, at the out-of-town road-houses, the passer-by heard the clamor of the oppressed piano as its aged voice quavered to the airs of the dance, to whose rhythmic utterances swiftly revolved Hawk-club men, and in their arms women with painted cheeks, and shameless eyes.

Home along the outlying boulevards, as dawn glanced shyly over the walls of the eastern sky, went hacks, at a funeral pace, the driver nodding on his perch, and within a woman with disheveled hair, reclining on the shoulder of a Hawk, he leaning back in a corner, and both of them drunk and asleep.

Carriages driving furiously at midnight, would head for certain famous and infamous localities, carrying four young men, each puffing furiously at a cigar, and who, talking, singing, yelling all at once, would dismount in front of a house emblazoned with the scarlet insignia of the woman of Babylon, and a moment later, would inundate an apartment filled with women such as served in the temple of old Paphos.

In a vast apartment, gaudy with pictures,

rugs and tapestry, a half-dozen vestals, swart as night, nude as Venus rising from the foam, capered and posed lasciviously for the delectation of Hawks, who drank from bubbling champagne glasses, and with hoarse laughter watched the curious spectacle.

Jolly, jolly boys were they! The fumes of the fruit of the wine penetrated the chambers of their brain, and thence, carried along a thousand nerve-routes, touched every tissue till they were stimulated, drunken, roaring in every molecule of their bodies from scalp to toe-nail.

The aroma of the wine titillated their nostrils; its flavor gratified their palate; song and the laughter pleased their ear; and their eyes were charmed with visions of crimson cheeks, and the naked busts of voluptuous lorettes.

Thus in turn were all the senses ministered to, and made the source of libidinous enjoyment. Oh, so jolly were they! They kept fast horses and women, and blooded dogs; they wagered on horse-races; they "played bank;" they invested their money in "draw" and "stud-poker," the wheel and keno; they became drunk and visited their friends, the

filles de joies, and sobered up and grew drunk again; and thus alternated their efforts at happiness between wine and women, between the gambling-den and the meretricious splendors of the temples of Aphrodite.

What poor clerk, slaving sixteen hours a day for a pittance of seven dollars a week, and with this amount trying to support a sick wife and several children, does not envy the life of these roysterous, boisterous youths, as they carried on their labors of decorating the town with carmine?

Lucky dogs were they! Each of them had his mistress whom he supported, or who supported him according as luck varied in July wheat, the turn of the card in faro, or the filling of hands in poker.

It was a school with such a course of instruction that Paul Calkins was about to enter. Up to this point his life had been pure and he had no taint save the slight one that had been planted by gambling. What would happen to him when he joined this procession which went dancing, staggering, roaring Bacchanalian choruses, and committing all possible lewdnesses, hell-ward at a rattling pace?

It was a whirlpool in and about which the human waves ran with incredible swiftness, and irresistible fury. Would he be caught in its howling vortices, and drawn under and strangled in the whirling depths?

He is approaching a crisis in whose outcome much is involved. He has a beautiful wife, a lovely babe, a good business position, a reputable social standing, a substantial fortune already accumulated, and prospects that promise him even greater wealth. All these are now on one end of the balance while on the other is the new-born desire to gamble. Which of these will outweigh the other?

Time will show.

As for Paul himself, he never dreamed of the imminency of danger. He left his wife at home smiling and happy, with the infant sleeping on her knees. What is there to suggest a catastrophe? Nothing whatever. No man in Chicago is better situated than he.

He entered the main card-room under the escort of Lafarge, who introduced him to the players. A seat was offered him. Pulling out a roll of bills, he called for a stack, and the play went on.

The die was cast. The crisis of his life came and passed, and he knew it not.

That same night Lafarge visited Natalie.

"I see joy in your face, my son," said the Ogress as she closely scanned his countenance. "The Fetich has heard my prayer."

"Yes, maumee, you are right. The work goes on and the reward will soon be paid."

The great eyes of Natalie flamed with excitement, and her smile drew her upper lip far above her protruding teeth till they shone like the white fangs in the mouth of a snarling wolf.

Lafarge departed without asking for his usual "tip" as to lucky days and numbers. Some other matter seemed to possess his thoughts.

VIII.

THE COMPOSITE OF THE GAMBLER.

What was originally a diversion, an amusement, to Paul Calkins, fast passed through various stages until it became a passion. It took hold of him as the disease of opium-eating fastens itself on the body, soul, brain, and moral and spiritual nature of its victim.

Hitherto prompt in his business hours, and in attention to his duties, he began, little by little, to neglect them. Now and then, on some excuse, he would leave his labors, and go to the club in the afternoon in order to gratify his desire to play. His hours of leaving the club to return to his home gradually grew later.

He had naturally no desire for stimulants, but the frightful mental depression attendant on long sessions at the gaming table, and the chagrin of losses, made him weak and nervous, and almost forced the use of alcoholic

drinks for recuperation. In the due course of events, the reaction following the use of stimulants demanded an increase of their strength and quantity, so that he was forced by a double necessity to use, and constantly enlarge the amount of agents to keep something like an equilibrium in his vital and moral forces. .

And thus it happened that week by week the habits of gambling and intemperance grew on him, and, devil-fish like, coiled their slimy tentaculæ about him till escape was impossible.

Not only does this infernal habit of gambling necessitate the use of stimulants, but it enwraps its victims in further meshes. It is but a short step from the hell of the gambler to that of the courtesan. With his moral nature deadened by the benumbing qualities of gaming; with alcohol rousing his viler passions, and at the same time smothering his moral sense, the gambler is in a condition to resort to any excitement, however vicious or degrading.

The gin-mill, the gambling-room and the bagnio are the stakes which mark out the triangle of the gamblers' area, and in which they "live, move and have their being."

Paul "went with the boys," not at first into the domain of Cyprus, but in the Bacchanalian processions in which intoxication was the presiding genius. Frequently the taint of liquor was on his breath when his wife kissed him on his return from the club; and once or twice, his step was unsteady, and his utterance thick and husky; and at last, one night, he climbed the stairway to his sleeping-room so intoxicated that he fell at full length and helpless on the floor.

It is not to be supposed that his descent was unaccompanied with regret or reflection. He fully appreciated the peril that menaced him, and the degradation which enthralled him. He fought against his vicious environment like a lion caught in a net. A thousand times, when his losses were exceptionally large, did he solemnly resolve that that night should be the very last one that he should touch a card, or a glass of stimulants.

Again and again did the degradation of his course present itself to him in flaming colors, and a thousand times did he regard himself with horror, and determine on reformation. Scores and scores of times would he leave a game blaspheming over his infatuation, and

solemnly vowing that he would never again visit a card-room or participate in the accursed practice. In such cases, the next morning brought a mitigation of his self-abasement. The sin seemed less hateful ; and later in the day he was again in his seat, conscience for the moment stifled, his desire for gain whetted to its keenest edge, and his nerves thrilling with the swift variations of the play.

The real game of poker is in a certain sense a mental entity. It is something which exists within the soul of the player, and all we learn of it is through its visible manifestations. Primarily, the game considered from this standpoint, is the energizing of a desire for gain. This quality is the same as that which inspires commercial operations, the painting of pictures, the use of the jimmy by the burglar, and the grinding of a hand-organ by a blind beggar. In the game of poker the desire for gain assumes the character of greed. It is a voracious, pitiless, insatiable appetite for money. It is a special development of the instinctive desire for accumulation, and in this direction, it loses its original qualities and becomes malignant.

One can judge of the character of the real,

the underlying game, and the changes it undergoes, by watching the outward and visible indications of its progress as afforded by the table with chips and players. These manifestations are always curious. They assume forms of infinite variety. When specially examined as indicative of the quality of greed referred to, they are marked and interesting. The player becomes totally absorbed as if in a trance; he does not hear the story which is being related by a disengaged associate; his entire being is concentrated in the stake immediately at issue; it may be the last cent which one of them possesses, and yet his opponent, knowing this, is as eager to obtain it as if it involved the retention of his own eternal salvation.

Greed, grasping, profound, swinish, is the controlling element in this subjective game of poker, this, the inward, real contest. It does not involve the possession of some stake offered as a prize for strength or skill, but is really for the vulgar possession of money. It is not a contest between chivalrous knights, but is in the nature of a hoggish rush for the provender poured in the trough.

Other qualities than those of greed develop

themselves in this underlying game. Intense antagonisms are generated. The loss of a pile of chips begets in the loser a momentary hatred which in its intensity is murderous. These constantly-occurring ebullitions of anger constitute, in the course of a few hours a sufficient aggregate to incite the commission of a homicide or almost any other deadly offence. This manifestation permits the conclusion that the real game of poker possesses another element in addition to greed—that of hatred.

In what is termed a “gentlemen’s game,” in which the players at least pass for gentlemen in society, in their symptomatic role as players, they become demoralized in tone and speech. Ribaldry trickles into the conversation; profanity makes its appearance here and there; a curse wrung by disappointment or an oath elicited by triumph punctuates the flow of conversation. Indecent narrations, foul expressions, bald and offensive vulgarity are among the frequent developments.

This permits another deduction as to the real qualities of the game. Greed and hatred have been shown to be essential portions of its composition; and now, when indecent nar-

rations, oaths, curses are exhibited, there is established the existence of another quality which may be termed moral laxity.

A marked lack of sympathy is constantly manifested in the game. Men under its influences become as hard as steel, and as void of sympathy as a dead hog. Cases in which players have lost to the extent of crippling them and their families never excite the commiseration of the gamester, but rather afford him something in the nature of a feeling of triumph.

The rank superstition developed at the gaming table has many horrifying phases. It often happens that hours will pass and a player will never have a winning hand dealt him, while the other players are getting something. He begins to think that there can be no mere chance in this condition in which, sit where he will at the table, cut and deal the cards as he may, he gets nothing.

"How can blind chance," he asks angrily, "arrange to give these men good cards in every deal, and thus skip me for hours? Chance cannot do it!" And then the idea of some intelligent potency presents itself as interfering to prevent his success. There is

but one power that can do this and that, God. A feeling of hatred arises. "What have I done that He should interfere?" Often this idea finds expression in words. The name of Deity is foully aspersed for His supposed malignant influence in the game.

One sometimes hears God cursed as if He were a beast. Revolting blasphemies are heard which do not spare the Virgin nor the Son.

And thus in addition to greed, hatred, lack of sympathy and the like, the underlying game of poker develops blasphemy of the most shocking nature. It is not the same as the average oath of execration, or the savage curse hurled at intangible luck, but a direct, blind and furious assault directed against the very throne.

Such are the detestable qualities which underlie, and energize the average game of poker. An analysis of the motives inspiring any species of gambling will show the same component elements.

Every confirmed gambler is at once a brute, a blasphemer, and often a drunkard and a debauchè. He is the sum of all wickedness.

All these depths were being gradually ex-

plored by Paul Calkins. He did not limit himself to the game in the Hawk club. Once Lafarge said to him, late one night, when he had been a loser :

“Let’s go over and get even at the bank.”

They went to a faro-den, and thenceforth Paul added this branch of dissipation to his sum-total. Sometimes he made a large winning, by which he was elated, and led to believe that he had discovered the process by which he might recover his already enormous losses. But the belief was illusory ; while he now and then won at the new game, the average results were against him, and he continued to be a regular loser.

In proportion as he lost, he drank to drown his regret; his humiliation and the remembrance of his losses. Alcohol is a speedy builder ; it reconstructs fortunes, restores lost happiness, but its works are ephemeral. The castle of to-night, with its turrets, its barbicans, its merlons, and its lofty ramparts, which alcohol builds at the prayer of the homeless vagabond, is very beautiful, stately, and apparently imperishable, and yet the sun of morning melts it away like frost-work.

IX.

MOTHER AND BABE.

Eleanor Calkins, unlike a majority of women in her character, her experiences, and her marriage, was utterly unlike them in many other particulars. The increasing absences of her husband at night; the evidences that he was guilty of excess in his drinking, the changes to the worse in his appearance and temper, all these did not cause her to lose her confidence in him.

He had told her that he was much embarrassed in business matters, and she believed him. She was willing to conclude that to this fact were due his late hours, his overstimulation, and his altered demeanor. That he was engaged in gambling, she never for a moment suspected. In fact, in this respect, there was exhibited one of her characteristics in which she differed essentially from most other wives. She did not have a particle of

the mischievous element, suspicion, in her composition.

The average wife too often regards the husband as a piece of personal property, somewhat as if he were a poodle to be led by a string. She is everlastingly haunted by a suspicion that when not in sight, he is engaged in something wrong. That he is ever kept out late by business, billiards, or in an innocent drinking bout with some old cronies, is preposterous. There are, in the estimate of some wives but two reasons why their husband remains out late at night; one of these is gambling, and the other, women.

Eleanor lacked the possession of this brutal incredulity in her husband's integrity, and as a consequence did not overwhelm him with innuendoes, and complaints. In fact, Paul often wished that she might greet him with tears and reproaches; "For," as he thought, "her gentle patience makes my misdoings seem all the more inexcusable. Should she play the termagant, it would afford me an opportunity to fly into a passion, and give me some sort of an excuse for my offences."

Unfortunately the downward career of Paul was so swift that nothing less potent than

annihilation could stop it. However, her uncomplaining endurance could have done more than any ordinary obstacle to slow his descent, although it would have failed to arrest it. Persistent "nagging," querulous complaining, denunciation, scolding, abuse, whimpering, tears, on the part of a wife, never yet reformed the faults of a husband; on the other hand, the result is generally to arouse a spirit of defiance, and to intensify and confirm, the habits complained of.

Not irritated by suspicions as to the cause of her husband's absence, the burden she was called on to bear was, for the time, much lightened. She felt concerned, of course, that he was embarrassed in business matters, but even this was not oppressive. She had shown when she left her paternal home that she held considerations of wealth much lower than others relating to her personal preferences. Hence, the possible loss of fortune did not greatly distress her.

The only thing that disturbed her was the mental condition of Paul. That he was suffering intensely was shown by his appearance, his extreme nervous irritation, and his inflammatory temper. From an equable, ever-

pleasant companion, he had become irascible to an extraordinary extent. She could, had she been of the ordinary mould, have taken advantage of the opportunity to retaliate by sharp retorts, and a clamorous antagonism. She did nothing of the kind. She bore his impatience without resistance, and by every means which gentleness could suggest, endeavored to alleviate rather than to augment the unpleasantness of the situation.

If, in after life, Eleanor had occasion to review this period with all its surroundings plainly within her vision, she would be able to at least say :

“Had I made myself a thorn in his side at that period it would only have increased his wretchedness !”

The jaw, as its use was illustrated by Samson, is destructive of human life ; and in no case on record has it been of value in the cure of deep-seated maladies like intemperance, gambling, and similar afflictions.

One warm afternoon, Eleanor and her babe were alone in the sleeping-room. It was a most charming picture, the mother, the child, and their surroundings. Soft-hued curtains gave tone to the light, and modified furniture

and pictures into a harmonious unity. Eleanor lay extended on the white counterpane of the bed reclining partly on her right side and shoulder, while the babe lay in the bend of her arm, with its face to that of the mother. She wore a wrap of some thin stuff that revealed beneath it the exquisite outlines of her form in all their rounded beauty from her slippered feet to her snow-white neck. Her purplish hair was uncoiled, and flung back and lay in broad, and charming confusion over the white *couverture*, affording a beautiful contrast in color effects.

The infant, now something over a year in age, was a slender little figure with a coronal of flossy gold. Its face was turned toward the mother's, and its tiny hands wandered over her shapely bosom with caressing touches.

Eleanor's face exhibited some indications of change since the day when she first put on the wedding ring. She was perceptibly a trifle older. Her face had thinned a shade; her eyes had deepened a little in their blueness. The change was not, however, for the worse. The virginal shyness no longer shone from cheeks, eyes and forehead, but in

their place had come a something suggestive of maturity. It was the ripe, rich maternal bloom that characterized her countenance, and gave it a mellow warmth.

A close observer may have noticed in addition to these changes, a hint, a trace, of anxiety which had found lodgement in tiny depressions at the corners of her mouth and beneath her eyes. It may have been the tone of the softened light that produced this impression, it may be that the lines were there, but so faint that they were more in the nature of a foreshadowing than a reality.

There is no period in a mother's life so full of unalloyed happiness as when she watches the progress of the slow developments of her baby. She sees indications of recognition and intelligence long before they can be detected by others. Its inchoate utterances assume form and meaning early to her mind ; and what to others is mere sound is to her ears the intelligent expression of a thought. She distinguishes the word "Ma-ma," days, weeks before it becomes tangible to the ears of other hearts.

How her thoughts wander out into the remote distance as she gazes fondly into the

face of the little dot! If it be a girl, the mother sees her full-grown, and in the far future the attendant, the affectionate servitor of a gray-haired woman; if a boy, she sees him a healthy, robust man, beautiful in his face and in his life, and the willing staff of her old age.

Alas, how many of these sweet imaginings fail to become realized! It is a grand provision in the construction of things that the future is veiled against human vision. What mother would dare risk the view of the reality to come, as she sits dreaming over her innocent and helpless child?

Like all mothers, Eleanor babbled to, and gossiped with, her baby. She pretended to receive wonderful secrets from its lips, and in turn told it impromptu fairy tales relating to the present and the future, and the while, punctuated her narrations with quick kisses snatched from the rose-bud lips. Papa, Mamma and the Baby, the trinity of the maternal worship, were mainly the theme of her caressing words, and thus it ran in some of its phases:

“Does she love her mamma? Does she love her papa? Poor papa! It must love

papa! Papa loves the baby, and baby must love papa! Give me a great big kiss, if you love papa! There! that's awful sweet! Now I know that you will love poor papa! Will my sweetie always stay with her mamma, and always love her, and always be her blessed little darling?"

To the musty nature of the old maid and that of the confirmed old bachelor, and in fact to very few people outside the mother and child, is the baby-talk of the former of surpassing interest. In truth, however, it is among the choicest of human utterances, for it is the unalloyed inspirations of pure affection.

The kiss of the wife may in reality mean a seal-skin cloak; that of the maiden by a youth, betrayal; that of the *fiancée* the splendor of the engagement ring, that of the child the prospect of cake or candies. But the kiss of the babbling infant by its mother has no ulterior motive; it is an emanation straight from the depths of the maternal heart.

It is possible that in the prattle of Eleanor to her infant she may have unconsciously indicated something in the nature of a faint foreboding. The frequent allusions to "poor

papa" may have been the expression of one of those deeper impressions which, without premonition, or apparent reason, give existence to a menacing note. It may be that there are certain instincts, located deep in the composition of men, which, like the rattle of the snake, present warning of coming peril.

Often in the night there rises to the surface of the stream of slumber noxious bubbles which burst and taint the atmosphere breathed by the sleeper. In whatever shape they appear, they are intangible, evanescent, indefinable, and in some vague way, afford an augury of evil.

X.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE.

One morning after Paul had risen from his bed, after having slept with the feverish unrest growing from intoxication and nervous irritation, he presented an unusually haggard appearance. Black sacks had formed beneath his eyes, deep lines had been plowed from the corners of his mouth, his complexion had a tinge of yellow, and his voice was tremulous and husky.

Eleanor was startled by the change in his appearance, and said :

“You are not well this morning, are you?”

“No, I’m feeling wretched.”

“What do you think is the trouble?”

“Well, in fact, I think it is mental, and comes from business difficulties.”

“Indeed !”

“Yes, I’m in deep waters, and whether or not I shall be drowned is as yet uncertain.”

"Would there be any use in your telling me the situation? Could I be of any assistance in any way?"

"I'm afraid not. Women do not comprehend business details. It would only worry you. Still, I suppose you might understand that I have already lost a good deal of money in my business, and unless some change comes, I shall lose a good deal more."

"I'm very sorry to hear it," said Eleanor with a sympathetic voice. "Is there no possibility that things may change for the better?"

"They may, and they may not. I have a large sum in the Crystal Gold-mining Co., which is about certain to be a dead loss. I bought a large quantity of wheat, and the price is dropping every day. Some South-western which I sold is going up, and some St. Louis and Mackinaw securities which I took on a debt at 33 have dropped to 7."

"Why, that is perfectly awful! I don't wonder that you are ill. But never mind! Health is far better than money; don't worry! What can't be helped must be endured."

It will be seen that Eleanor in this matter as in so many others, differed from the aver-

age wife. She did not ask him why he hadn't more sense than to buy wheat when he ought to have sold it; or why he hadn't asked her advice in his investments, on the ground that two heads are better than one; which was always the way with the men who never think women have any sense; and if they would consult them oftener and take their advice, they would be much better off!

As may be inferred by those who are familiar with the career of Paul up to this date, he showed himself, in his communications to his wife, to be an "able-bodied liar." All the investments and losses which he detailed were pure inventions. He had not a dollar in grain, mines, or stocks; it was true that his business was irretrievably embarrassed, and that he had lost large amounts of money. All of it, however, had gone across the "lay-out" of the faro-dealer, or over the table of the poker-players.

He did not tell her that through his neglect of his duties, he had quarreled with his partners of the book-house with which he had been connected, and that he had been forced to withdraw, and that now he had no legitimate occupation—his entire time when absent

from home being spent in the card-room of the Hawk club or in other localities devoted to gambling.

In fine, in his babble about wheat, South-western, Crystal and the like, he had made no mention of the fact that he was already near the brink of bankruptcy.

"Let us hope for the best!" were the last words of the womanly nature of his wife. They were not the utterance of an average wifely feeling, for that would have insisted that whatever he had done was wrong, and that if there was anything he contemplated doing, he should do something else.

He derived little comfort from the hopeful suggestions of Eleanor. He knew that unless chance reversed the existing conditions, that if things went on long as they were now going, there was nothing before him but absolute ruin.

One may wonder that at this point in his career, appreciating all the evils of his position, and foreseeing all that menaced him in the future, he did not at once change his life and devote himself to rescuing the remnants of his property, and the rebuilding of at least a portion of his fortune. Manhood would

suggest such a course; the thought of wife and child should be an imperative command to him to take such action; the good opinion of the world, decency, honesty, the love of family; in brief, everything good and virtuous called on him to at once change the course of his life.

As well ask the confirmed inebriate to abandon his appetite for drink; the idiot to shake off his imbecility; the consumptive to throw aside the lesions of his lungs, as to ask the hardened gambler to give up his infatuation. The confirmed drunkard, the incurable imbecile, and the doomed consumptive may ardently desire relief, but it is beyond their power.

There may be cases where the gambler has reformed, but they are rare. Statements prevail here and there through the ages, of the dead having been restored to life; but the instances are few, and their authenticity doubtful.

At that period in the history of Chicago, as is true of substantially all other periods, gambling possessed a thousand advantageous points. It was sustained by the police authorities; it was not condemned by a unan-

ymous public opinion; and in view of the gigantic speculations in real estate, and the products dealt with on the Board of Trade, a speculator, *alias* a gambler, was not tabooed as he should have been. In fine, gambling was tolerated.

Men who owned gambling-dives, or had an interest in them, were in some well-known instances, members of the Board of Trade. They went on the board during business hours, bought and sold grain in larger or smaller quantities, but mainly used their positions to secure customers for their private business. Such men gave gambling a quasi respectability. They visited the corridors of the large hotels and skillfully introduced themselves to strangers, and lured them to their dens.

In every establishment devoted to faro there were rooms for poker parties. In the rear of a great majority of all the whisky dens there were inclosed stalls in which poker was played night and day. Over all the business portion of the city, and along the avenues, there were "clubs" organized under the laws for one purpose and devoted exclusively to gambling.

All sorts of devices were resorted to for

the securing of patronage. Dignified men haunted the hotels and places of amusement to make the acquaintance of strangers, to invite them to a quiet place to drink a bottle of wine, and which was always decanted in the ante-rooms of a gambling hell. No man was safe from the influence of this far-reaching agency. A well-dressed, polite, genteel person would enter the office of a business man :

“ Good-morning, sir ! I hope you are quite well, sir.”

“ Good-morning,” the occupant would naturally respond. And then, scanning the caller with some hesitation, “ I can’t just recall your name, although your face is very familiar—let me see—”

“ Guess you don’t remember me. My name is Johnson of the firm of Crooks & Co., and I met you at the banquet of the Herring club.”

“ Ah, yes, I remember,” says the other with that mendacity which seems to be an essential part of the amenities of social life. “ Sit down, Mr. Johnson. What can I do for you, this morning?”

“ Well, this is it : You know the manager of the St. Bacchus hotel? No? Well, he

knows you, and he asked me to call on you and say that Mr. Jones, and Mr. Brown and two or three other gentlemen are anxious to have a quiet place where they can meet and have a little game of poker, and they would like to have you join them."

The names of Brown and Jones are those of well-known citizens, and the business man is flattered that they have thought of him as a member of their party.

"Yes, I don't mind dropping around some evening."

"All right, come this evening. Brown and Jones have both promised to have a little session at eight o'clock."

"I'll see. Perhaps I may drop in."

The slick Mr. Johnson bids him a polite, an almost obsequious adieu, leaving the business man under the impression that he is a highly-esteemed citizen.

The agile Johnson next flies to the business places of Messrs. Brown and Jones, introduces himself in about the same fashion to those two gentlemen respectively, and tells each the hotel romance, and simply changes the recital by introducing the name of Mr. Smith, whom he had just visited. Both gentlemen

feel highly complimented with the invitation, and promise to be on hand.

Mr. Johnson then hurries back to the St. Bacchus caravansera, ascends three flights of stairs, knocks in a peculiar manner at a door, which is at once opened, admitting him into an ordinary hotel sleeping-room, by a slim young man with traces of small-pox ravages on his countenance, and up-ended moustache, and with hair well-greased and parted exactly along a line perpendicular to the axis of his ears.

"Got 'em, by ——, cully!" he ejaculates in a triumphant voice. "Each old —— —— bit without even stoppin' to nibble. They'll all be on hand this evenin', and we'll have a fine racket, for they've got no end of stuff."

"Who'll we get to entertain 'em?"

"Well, there's 'Cracker Jack;' how'll he do?"

"First class, only he's stayin' under cover because his 'uncle' has his clamps on his clean shirt."

"So! Well, you'll have to fix him out the best you can. He'll be a clerk in a real estate office. He ought to do it well, because he always has samples on hand with him."

When the smiling Brown, Jones and Smith climb up to the room in the evening, they find Mr. Snapp, a real-estate dealer; Mr. Gobble, a board of trade man, and Mr. Shuffle, cattle-dealer from Montana, a bluff, honest-looking old gentleman, all waiting for them.

They are delighted when they see the cloth removed from a table in the center of the room, and discover that the piece of furniture has a slit in the middle, while a moment later a pack of cards is tossed on the green cloth, and the pock-marked person produces a rack of chips, and then stands patiently to get a response to his query: "How many will you have, gentlemen?" Each of the trio is pleased over all these things, because each of them believes that it was all done for his special benefit by the others.

This "fake" is one of the most common, even at this time. It is successful in "roping" any number of good-natured business men into a game where they are fleeced by sharpers without the slightest difficulty.

With these inducements meeting one at every step, it was and is almost impossible to

avoid the entanglements of the gambling dens. Always is the "sucker," as the contemplated victim is universally known among the fraternity, informed that it is a "little game" among "business men," and "no gamblers admitted."

The multiplicity of these avenues hellward ; the attractions which environ their entrance ; the bursts of music and hilarity which come up from the distance, render them popular, and the crowds about them fight for entrance.

Enveloped in an atmosphere of speculation ; with gambling everywhere about him ; with constant inducements about him to lead him astray, it is not to be wondered at that Paul Calkins traveled the beaten pathways, in company with the crowds, and swiftly made his way toward perdition.

XI.

THE BATS IN SEARCH OF PREY.

Lafarge had given up his commercial position and now had an interest in a faro-bank. He was not able to supply the necessary capital himself, but had found no trouble in obtaining all that was needed. A well-known professional gambler acted as the figure-head of the new adventure; Lafarge took charge of the outside business, such as "plugging"—that is drumming for customers—and the main amount of capital was furnished by a wealthy and prominent business man.

It is a curious fact in Chicago that a large share of the money used to back faro-banks, is supplied by men who, as a rule, belong to what are known as the better classes. The same thing is seen in other directions. Much of the property used for sexual traffic, in many parts of the city, is owned by citizens of high social standing, and large wealth, and

who are perfectly informed as to the uses made of their tenements.

Without the backing of this class of men who are possessed of money, the faro-bank would be a much smaller factor than it now is. It is a capital investment, and pays a much larger percentage than any legitimate business.

"You see," said Lafarge, in conversation with a man whom he finally induced to furnish the means, "there is nothing that pays so well as a good faro-bank. You are certain to get from fifty to a thousand per cent. on your money."

"But isn't there a chance of losing?" queried the cautious capitalist.

"No, sir! Not one chance in ten thousand. Faro is for the owner as near a sure thing as can be operated."

"How, if such be the fact, is it that I see now and then in the newspapers accounts of the winning against a bank of five, ten and even twenty thousand dollars, by some player?"

"Oh, that's a 'fake!' That is done to catch the 'chumps.' By an understanding with some chap, he is reported to have made a

tremendous winning against a certain bank, which the newspapers all publish. Everybody sees the item, and every one thinks: 'A bank which would lose so much, must be on the square; and if Dinks can win five thousand, there is no reason why I shouldn't have the same luck.' As a consequence, such a rumor always brings hundreds of new customers, and the bank, without losing a cent, gains largely in custom."

"Ah, I see!" said the capitalist grinning, as he spoke, over the smartness of the transaction.

"Yes, that's the racket. It is as old as gambling. It was done in the same way, and for the same purpose three hundred years ago."

"Is it possible! And why don't people see through it?"

"The people as a rule are gulls. It is true that this 'fake' is hundreds of years old, and has been perpetrated on each generation, and exposed a million times, and yet the idiots fall into the trap every time it is baited with this 'Big Winning' meat. It is the same in lotteries. Every few months it appears in the press that a tailor, or a blacksmith, or some obscure person has won a large prize in

a lottery. His name, residence and all particulars are given, and thereupon people say, 'If this were not true the papers would not give the name and address of the winner. Lotteries are honest, after all; they do give prizes; there is a chance of winning, and so, let's all buy tickets.'"

"I should think that men would get wiser in this age, when everybody can read the newspapers, and learn of all these things and the manner in which they can avoid being over-reached."

"One would naturally think so, it is true; but as a fact, the race does not improve in sagacity. It is as gullible as it ever was. Some new thing is now and then required to catch the 'suckers,' but not many. As you can see by the papers, every day there is a 'jay' who is caught on the old bunko-swindle, or on the bogus check or bond 'racket;' the thing is exposed by the newspapers, and yet the green ones are none the wiser. I tell you that there is more money in working on the credulity and stupidity of people than in any of the regular methods of business."

The capitalist readily advanced the money after hearing the statements of Lafarge. It

is unnecessary to state that he regularly received a substantial dividend on his share of the "bank-roll."

It is not to be wondered at that men will dare almost any risk, fine, imprisonment, police surveillance, and social ignominy to establish and operate faro-banks. "There's millions in it!" A faro-banker rents and fits up most expensively, capacious and princely rooms. He puts in appliances for gaming that cost thousands of dollars. He employs dealers, "look-outs," "cappers," "pluggers," and numerous other assistants. Often the patrons of his establishment are furnished with a midnight dinner at which the choicest of viands and potables are served without stint. He pays from one hundred to five hundred a month for "protection" to influential local politicians.

This involves a royal outlay. And yet the "banker" is able to purchase and own fast horses, to build palatial houses, and to expend hundreds of thousands per annum on his mistresses.

The people see all this, they throng his apartments under the imbecile impression that the man who is spending all this money

is going to allow them to win some of it. He cannot afford to give away money ; he needs all that comes to him to supply his comforts, and to afford opportunity for extravagance.

Does that ass, the faro-player, suppose that the faro-banker is going to fit up sumptuous apartments, give banquets and all that, and then allow the public to win his money ?

Lafarge invited Paul Calkins to visit the new bank without informing him that he had in it a personal interest. The rooms were newly-furnished, bright, attractive, and so pleased Paul that he spent considerable time there, and also gave the "bank" an occasional *douccur* of his remaining capital. Attentive colored servants waited on the visitors ; there was an ample supply of liquors and cigars which was distributed with freedom. Alcohol is the lubricating material of the Juggernaut of gambling. Without it the axles would become rusted, and the machine could not move.

Paul strolled into the den one evening and found Lafarge reading a newspaper. He was particularly affable. He warmly shook the hand of Paul, saying :

"Old fellow, how are you? I'm devilish glad to see you. You are not looking tip-top, by-the-way; what's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. Possibly too much 'budge' now and then, and lateness in getting to bed on an occasional night."

In fact, dissipation was plainly recording its advance on the face of Paul. It had grown much thinner, his eyes were perceptibly dulled, and an expression of anxiety, care, and fatigue had taken possession of his features.

"Come in the other room and let's cheer up with a small bottle."

The champagne was ordered, poured out and drunk.

"That touches the exact spot," said Lafarge. "It's glorious medicine, and I'm going to try another dose. Here, boy, bring another bottle, and a quart, this time!"

The second bottle was duly opened and its contents drained to the bottom. Paul's face was flushed, and his eyes sparkled with excitement as they reached the end of the second bottle.

"We must have a little cogniac to regulate this Veuve Cliquot. The widow may be

disposed to be fractious and uneasy. A little brandy will just nicely settle her, and insure good behavior," said Lafarge.

Two glasses of cogniac were brought and swallowed. Paul's face grew more crimson, and the blood leaped like lightning through his veins.

"Let's take a hack and drive around awhile, and see what can be seen," said Lafarge, after they had finished their brandy.

"All right, my boy!" responded Paul with a considerable thickness on his tongue, and a slight inequality in his gait. They descended to the street, hailed a passing hack, entered it and drove away.

A few nights before this meeting, Lafarge a couple of hours before midnight descended into a basement saloon on one of the principal thoroughfares in the business portion of the city. He entered a spacious and irregular room in which was a bar, with its shining furniture and its parti-colored fluids, a counter over which men in white aprons passed dishes of food in obedience to demands from a half score of busy waiters; and a large number of small, plain tables about which were seated many people, both men and women.

The men wore their hats, and sat, ate, drank, smoked, singly or in groups, in which here and there women mingled. There were couples of women seated alone; there was now and then a solitary woman sipping beer at a table, and evidently a stranger, and waiting for some companion.

It was a fairly well-dressed crowd; many of the men wore silk hats and frock coats, with clean linen, while the women were about the same class as to clothing. As to other qualities, all were young; that is the majority of both sexes were on the sunny side of life. There were two or three quite young girls, not yet out of their teens; some youths with boyish faces and faint shadings of down on their lip, and a few specimens of elderly men with red eyelids and locks of thin gray hair showing under their hats.

Lafarge took a seat at a vacant table, called for a glass of beer and commenced sipping it leisurely as he glanced over the assembled people. It was a scene full of a certain sort of animation. There was a steady flow of the sound of conversation, over which broke bursts of laughter, the clatter of glasses, the calls of the waiters for drinks or food, and the

scuffling of moving feet. Everybody seemed at home in his ease, and while the men filled the atmosphere with smoke, apparently without thought that there were women in the room, the latter inhaled the vaporous fumes with complete indifference.

Who are, and whence come the women in this resort?

When the shadows of night begin to settle over the city, and the light grows crepuscular, figures unknown to the day suddenly appear and flit hither and thither along the streets. Their movements are irregular; they pass up one thoroughfare, down another, across, and they wind in and out. They remind one of the dimly-visible bat whose erratic flight may be detected in the growing darkness.

These figures with the eccentric movements are alike in nothing save their sex as women. They are infinitely variable in appearance, dress, gait, demeanor, and attractiveness. They are infantile, mature. Some of them have faces full of charm, others are plain, some repulsive, and many have the calloused expression of countenance which comes from contact with long and painful experience.

A novice in city life would not comprehend

the character of these persons. The stranger meets one, and sees, perhaps, a slender figure with a modest face and downcast eyes, and who walks with a hurried step. In her hand is a little bag like that in which the working-girl carries her luncheon; she seems belated as if she had been detained at shop or office, and pushes swiftly on as if anxious to escape notice and reach her home. Furtive glances shoot from her downcast eyes, and, as it were, are appeals to the groups of loungers on the street-corners to respect her youth, innocence and unprotected situation. She shrinks away from contact with the men gathered in front of the saloons, as if there were infection in their touch.

If the stranger who noticed the passing of this home-hurrying girl, with her modest carriage and her timid glances, should happen a little later to stray from the main street into a side one, where the lights are dim and the pedestrians few, he will notice a feminine form strolling leisurely along the deserted sidewalk. Her gait is dilatory and easy; she is apparently waiting for some one to overtake her; and should some man pass her she murmurs softly, "Good-evening!"

If the stranger should meet her under the gas-light, he will be surprised to recognize the timid creature whom he saw a few minutes before, hurrying along the main thoroughfare. The mystery may puzzle him; he may return to his country home and never be able to explain the metamorphosis of the pretty shop-girl with her shrinking, modest demeanor into the woman who strolled leisurely along the side-street, and stared at him with brazen glances as he passed.

He will perhaps never know that the woman whom he met is one of the potent factors of civilization; that the timid creature in the Garden City is the same as the woman, all rouge, silks, feathers and blasphemy, in the Strand and Haymarket in London, the tripping *bonne*, or shy-faced *couturiere* on the boulevards of Paris.

She is the bat, the vampire of the woods, the *pieuvre* of the waters, the rapacious beast of the jungles of society. She was born when the world received its supply of women. She is older than the pyramids, and she is limited by the extent of the human race. She and her kind walked the streets of Athens and Rome centuries ago; they were present

in Babylon, Tyre, Sidon, and throughout the orient. They have overspread China; they abound in Japan, and the thousand isles of the ocean are haunted by their presence. They are in Thibet, Madagascar, India, Burmah, Tonquin; in fine, wherever there is humanity to be born, to labor, suffer, weep, die, they are to be found without limit.

Wherever night comes, and there is human life, the shy shop-girl, as she appears on the streets of Chicago, may be seen in one guise or another. She trips along the highways of the towns which lie at the base of the Himalayas, on the borders of the Adriatic, and on the vast levels of Asiatic Russia. No climate is too inhospitable, for her existence; no phase of life too savage for her endurance. Each night she is hurrying shyly home in the darkness; each night she idles in the by-places and—waits!

It was this woman and her sisters that sat around the tables in the saloon in the basement.

XII.

MORE BAIT OFFERED.

The gambler and the courtesan unite with a wonderful affinity. It may be that this comes from a sympathy in evil-doing, or for the reason that both are rejected by society, and are thus driven into contact like the lepers banished from cities into some appointed place.

Some little time after Lafarge entered, there came down the stairway a young woman, who glanced over the room, caught sight of Lafarge, recognized him with a movement of her eyes, and then seated herself beside him.

"Good-evening, Elise," said Lafarge, with a smile, as he shook her gloved hand. "You're on time. How have you been?"

"Pretty well, thanks. I should be entirely well if I were not so thirsty!"

"Ah, pardon me! What will it be? Beer?"

"Not to-night. Something deeper and

stronger. Some absinthe and whisky would about meet my case."

"Of course, anything you like! You might have a few drops of aqua fortis added to the whisky and absinthe to take off the rough edges," he said, with an intonation of irony.

"Don't try to be sarcastic! I know what I want, and intend to have it!"

"Good enough! You shall have it!"

The concoction was ordered and brought, and then the young woman commenced sipping it with an expression as if she liked it. She was a light blonde, about twenty years of age, with a voluptuous figure, strong features and cold gray eyes. The last-named retained none of the modest light peculiar to sweet girlhood; they were bold, staring, unflinching. This chaste beacon had been extinguished by the tempests of passion which had already swept over her young life.

The two chatted for a few moments, and then she suddenly said with considerable sharpness in her tones:

"Why haven't you been to see me for so long a time? It's years and years since I have seen the light of your ugly face."

"I've been awfully busy."

"Oh, yes, of course! 'Busy' I suppose, with some other woman!" Her tone was threatening, and her hard gray eyes blazed as she spoke.

"Honest, I have been awful busy. We have just got the bank into operation and it has been a hard job. But we are all right now, and we shall have more time."

"So! And how is the 'run' of 'suckers' at this season of the year? Is the river full of them?"

"The 'run' is pretty good, these days. Judge!" and he put his hand in the pocket of his vest and extracted a roll of greenbacks. "Here are some specimens of the new 'run'; nice and fat, ain't they?"

"My eyes are weak; I can't see them. I can tell better by feeling them."

"All right! Feel of them!" and he threw the roll into her lap. She seized it with something of the swoop of the hawk on its prey, and rapidly turned down the edges of the bills to note their denomination.

"Nearly all centuries!" she exclaimed rapturously, as she saw that the majority of the bills were each \$100 in denomination. "The suckers are coming in! Many thanks!"

and she lifted the skirt of her dress and deposited the money somewhere underneath.

Elise was under the "protection" of Lafarge. He had met her somewhere a year before, had become smitten with her voluptuous appearance, and had induced her to let him provide for her. She was not an innocent girl when he first met her; she had drifted into her present condition from heaven only knows where, and was adrift when he encountered her. She lived in a couple of rooms on the upper floor of a business block.

"Don't make a pauper of me!" he remonstrated, as she thus summarily disposed of the entire roll of bills. "Give me a little change, enough for car-fare, can't you?"

"Not a nickel! The walking is first-class, and it'll do your legs good to stretch 'em! Oh, no! Not a red!"

"All right, keep it, but don't throw it away. No one knows what may happen."

"Don't fret yourself; I'm in the 'lookout' and nobody is going to be robbed in the game!"

A little later, he said:

"I have a friend who has a 'bundle' which is worth picking up. Now I want you to

select one of the most taking girls among your acquaintances. She must be young, beautiful, bright, fascinating, and accomplished!"

"Is that all you want in her? I shall have to send up among the angels for so perfect a specimen."

"Well, all right; an angel be it, but she must be a fallen one. As soon as you find the party let me know. I will then make an arrangement to meet her at your rooms in company with my friend."

She promised to find the style of woman wanted. She had, during the conversation, emptied several glasses of beer after a draught of whisky and absinthe; and leaning on the arm of Lafarge, she left the saloon and proceeded down the street without exhibiting the least evidence of intoxication.

It was a week or so after this interview in the saloon, that occurred the conversation between Lafarge and Paul Calkins. The carriage in which they seated themselves drove for some distance and finally halted in front of a tall building whose street-floor was used for shops, and whose upper floors were occupied as residences. It was here that Elise had her apartments.

"Come in with me," said Lafarge. "I wish to see a friend. It wont take but a minute."

Paul went up with him. Elise was at home and received them very graciously in her snug and cosy rooms. As they came in, she appeared to be greatly amused at something.

"Excuse my laughing," she giggled, "but you nearly frightened the life and wits out of a friend of mine. She just dropped in to have a chat, and we were not expecting any one, and when she heard your knock, she thought it might be some one she did not wish to see, and in her hurry to get away, she fell over a chair, and almost broke her neck."

"We're awfully sorry, I'm sure, to have disturbed you, and especially to have alarmed your friend. Can we 'square' ourselves in any way?"

"Oh, it is of no consequence. I'll call her out and you can settle with her yourself."

She went to the door leading into her sleeping-room, opened it, and said:

"Here, Babet, come out! I have some particular friends here, who would like to see you and apologize for frightening you."

A moment later, a young woman came into the room.

"This is Babet, or sometimes known as 'the Panther.'" Elise then presented the two men, giving the real name of neither.

The new-comer was a figure to attract attention. She was not more than twenty in years, with a face as dark as that of a Spaniard. Her eyes were large, black as night, and the iris so extended that it frequently excluded the appearance of the white portion of the eye, giving her a sinister expression. Her head was small, her nose narrow and straight like the Grecian pattern; her lips were thin, her chin pointed, and her hair as black as her eyes.

Her hands were faultless in shape, her form *svelte* almost to emaciation, and yet was proportioned like a statue from the chisel of an artist. She did not seem to move by steps, but came forward with a species of glide, something like the stealthy movements of a cat.

She wore a close-fitting dress with a "pull-back" attachment, and which revealed every motion and outline of her form. The supple movements of her limbs, the litheness which seemed to pervade her, suggested still more strongly feline characteristics, and accounted for the nickname of "The Panther."

At first sight, she was not in the least attractive for beauty ; and yet as one studied her, she grew and expanded until she became fascinating. She was a dark mystery, at first ; then she interested one as one gazed into the unfathomable eyes, scanned the determined mouth, and watched the ceaseless play of her form within her constricting dress. Her voice was inexpressibly melodious, as was shown in the course of the evening, when to her own accompaniment, she sang an Italian air from *Traviata*, which showed that she possessed vocal powers of a high order.

She was a marvel in many respects. She used no slang ; she had evidently seen much of the world, both old and new, and conversed intelligently and gracefully on all the topics that came up in the course of the evening. Nothing in her language or actions would permit the inference that she was anything but a woman of culture and refinement.

Both the visitors became especially interested in her, which soon resulted in the appearance of an angry gleam in the eyes, and a crimson spot on the cheeks of Elise. There was a compression of her lips, as if she were restraining the outflow of something within,

which was struggling powerfully for exit. She caught the eyes of Lafarge, who glanced at her curiously for a moment, and then he dropped his eyes with some confusion.

"None of that, my friend!" she hissed a little later, when she could do so without attracting the notice of the others: "None of that, my friend, do you understand?" A half-frown gathered on his forehead, but with a smile intended to be reassuring, he answered:

"Don't worry yourself! I'm only curious. She's a rattler, isn't she?"

Paul appeared as deeply interested in Babet as his companion was. He was yet in the condition of exhilaration produced by his potations at the bank. Alcoholic vision always exaggerates; it intensifies the mysterious, enlarges beauties and defects, and presents everything in some form of amplification.

The peculiarities of Babet, her swarthinness, her wonderful eyes, her brightness, and her entire unlikeness to any other woman whom he had ever met, worked on his excited fancy and made of her something possessed of marvelous fascinations.

A couple of hours later the visitors depart-

ed. As they were going away, Paul said to Babet :

“ Shall I see you again ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Where and when ? ”

“ I will let you know. Good-night,” and she gave him her hand which was as soft as that of an infant, and but a trifle larger.

“ Hooked in good shape, isn't he ? ” asked Lafarge, in an aside to Elise, as they passed along the hallway.

“ Somebody is ‘ hooked ’ beyond all doubt ! ” she answered, with a tinge of sarcasm in her tone. “ Which ‘ he, ’ may be a question. Now,” she said in a vehement whisper, “ just you remember, I won't have any nonsense ! Hands off ! ”

Lafarge scowled at her as if he would have liked to strike her in the face with his fist, but suppressing his anger, he responded : “ You are an idiot ! Don't fret yourself ! ”

“ Well, what do you think of her ? ” asked Lafarge, as they rode away.

“ Which ‘ her ? ’ Elise or The Panther ? ”

“ Oh, Babet, of course ! ”

“ A very remarkable sort of a girl ! I never met anything like her,” was the non-committal answer. “ Who is she ? ”

"I can't say. I never saw her before this evening. She's Spanish or Italian probably. She's a thoroughbred, that's certain!"

While the influence of his intoxication remained, Paul thought only of the fascinating stranger.

XIII.

THE FISH IS LANDED.

"Have you seen The Panther since that night?"

"No, have you?"

"No."

"As for me, I never expect to see her again. In fact, I don't wish to see her. She is, I believe, a a dangerous woman." Thus Paul to Lafarge in his sober moments.

"Oh, bosh! You're off your feed just now, but you will come around after awhile. I was a good deal struck myself. She's a charmer, but Elise is in the 'lookout,' and I don't dare to try anything crooked. But you are bound to 'go in' there. You may kick all you like, but you can't help yourself. What is to be will be."

"Ah, well, we shall see!"

A week or so after the visit of the two men to the rooms of Elise, Paul received a note

beautifully written, and whose contents were as follows :

“ If you wish to renew an acquaintance which I, at least, found to be pleasant, you can see me on Friday evening at 11 o'clock at the New Rest.

“ BABET.”

He read the missive, and for an instant a flash of his earlier manhood came over him.

“ Infamous !” he ejaculated ; “ I will not go ! I am already sunk in degradation, but there are still profounder depths, and into these I shall not fall ! Gambler, drunkard, defaulter, I will not crown my infamy by deceiving my wife !”

At the hour named in the note, Paul Calkins found himself seated in the saloon-restaurant before described. He was under the influence of stimulants. He reasoned with himself with drunken logic : “ There is no harm in going ; nothing will come of it. She wishes to see me ; it may be on some matters that are outside of everything improper. There is no use in being frightened before one is hurt. Assumed dangers always lessen as they are approached. I will see, and nothing shall come of it. I can take care of myself !”

He had not long to wait. The Panther glided through the door-way as if she were as substanceless as a shadow. She caught sight of Paul as by intuition, and then in her willowy, indescribable way, crossed the room, and took a seat by him at a table.

"You are prompt," she said, with a delicious smile, as she ungloved and laid her velvety hand in his grasp. "I hardly expected that you would come," she continued. "You saw so little of me that—"

"I saw enough to bring me here," he interrupted with an attempt at gallantry.

"You are polite," she said with a smile that showed rows of teeth white and gleaming as sun-kissed ivory.

To detail their conversation would be useless, except so far as it may be necessary to say that during the interview she dazed him with her brilliancy, her caressing glances and gestures, her flexible and changeful poses.

She drank only lemonade, but encouraged Paul to imbibe something stronger. She refused his escort from the place, saying with a mischievous glance from her great eyes :

"I'm not sure yet that I can trust you. I'll have to see you again. I have but a step to

go, and I can take the street-cars as well as not. Good-night!" she said, as she beckoned a passing horse-car, and a moment later disappeared.

Her refusal to permit him to escort her piqued him, and increased his interest in the mysterious creature. She had given him nothing of her life, her occupation, or her purposes, during their conversation. She had apparently limited herself to exciting his curiosity, and then in baffling it. This treatment had the effect to stimulate his interest in her, and induce him to wish to see her again. As usual in the case of men, the obstacles thrown in his way by Babet, only stimulated the pursuit.

During the next few weeks, notes from Babet summoned him to meet her at the same place. He resisted less and less, and each time he went more willingly, and left her more fascinated than before. She was irresistible in her melodious voice, in her caressing manners, and the glances of her marvelous eyes. Her touch thrilled him, and went shivering along his nerves.

At last, one evening when she was about to leave, he implored her to allow him to accompany her.

"Come!" she simply said. He went with her, his brain on fire, and his heart throbbing with violence.

As they left the restaurant they did not notice Lafarge who sat in an obscure corner, and watched them with angry eyes.

"Strange," he soliloquized, "how this country-devil eternally crosses my path! He interfered with me in the case of the type-writing girl, for which I will never forgive him. And now when I have worked to get him in the hands of a woman who will utterly destroy him, and have succeeded, I find that I am jealous of him! He seems to have interested her; she, a woman who would see her mother on the rack without a particle of sympathy; she, who is soulless and heartless, and who has plundered and sent more men to the devil than any other hundred of her kind! I hate him all the more for her favor to him. He has run up a heavy account, and the day of settlement is not far away! That she-fiend will hurry up the end."

Impossible as it may seem to the decent soul, the degrading fact nevertheless exists, that innumerable men have special relations with courtesans who are inmates of infamous

houses. It is often the case that the woman is the victim of some man, who, unable or unwilling to support her, sends her to a bagnio where she earns her livelihood through the prosecution of her nefarious profession.

Meanwhile she claims the man to whom her downfall was due, or some other man to whom she has taken a fancy, for her lover. He visits her as such, is so accepted by the other inmates. Strangely enough, they have their jealousies, and their disagreements. She resents the slightest attention he may pay to any other woman, and is constantly on the watch to learn of any infidelity on his part.

If she discovers that he is unfaithful to her, she experiences all the agony, the rage of a virtuous woman, under similar circumstances. She weeps, she raves, blasphemes, and not unfrequently ends her life with poison to relieve her sufferings.

Meanwhile, in addition to his fealty he is expected to contribute to her liberal sums of money. These she keeps, expends to suit her necessities or her whims, and often stands ready to "stake" her lover in case he meets

with financial misfortune. Indeed, there are many of these women who not only do not receive a cent from their lovers, but actually furnish the money to support them.

Fancy the ineffable degradation of the masculine wretch who thus lives on the earnings of a woman's shame! Can there be anything more revolting, more disgusting, more damnable than the character and the life of these male dependents on the bounty of a prostitute?

There are other women of this class whose sole purpose is to secure all the gifts possible from their victims. To meet the demands of these cormorants, more crimes are conceived and carried into effect, than from all other motives. The first movement of the burglar, the foot-pad, the sneak-thief, is to go and lay the spoils of his crime in the lap of his favorite.

It was the influence of one of these women that Lafarge, through Elise, had invoked to put the finishing touches to the ruin of Paul Calkins.

More than any other class of men, gamblers sustain intimate relations with lewd women. In truth, gambling, drunkenness and libidinousness are inseparable.

PART THIRD.

I.

THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE VILE.

Five years had elapsed between the date of Eleanor's marriage and the events just recorded. Her baby had grown into a little fairy, full of vivacity, sweetness and affection, whose prattle was ceaseless, and a source of constant enjoyment to the mother.

The child filled the place vacated by Paul in the household. Its voice broke a silence that otherwise would have been intolerable, and supplied a companionship which the father had ceased to furnish. As he receded the child advanced, and thus prevented that vacuum in the soul of Eleanor which the situation would have created.

Paul now came home but little, and had ceased to offer excuses for his absences. He had grown moody, irritable, and savagely ill-

natured. He was silent and sullen when he was at home, and his presence oppressed the atmosphere till it almost choked his wife to inhale it. She no longer asked him concerning his business, his outgoing or incomings, his purposes, or his prospects. In fact, she saw but very little of him. If he came home at all it was always long after midnight, and often was it that he did not return for several days.

On such occasions, when the night was far advanced and he did not come, she drew her child closer to her heart, and with a half-whispered prayer to heaven for protection, and a gentle, regretful sigh, she sank into peaceful sleep.

"Sweet, do you love mamma?" as she laid her cheek against that of the babe, and the almost unconscious reply, "Yes, Mamma!" often was heard in the stillness of the night, and afforded a consolation of inexpressible sweetness.

Her life had become an isolated one. The large circle of friends and acquaintances which surrounded her at the time of her marriage had gradually been alienated. The habits of her husband prevented the return-

ing of evening visits, and slowly her calling acquaintances drifted away. And then rumors began to circulate that Paul was gambling, and this frightened others of the few that remained.

Eleanor felt the slight involved, but not keenly ; she was too proud to be hurt by this disaffection.

"I, at least, have not changed," she thought. "If they really cared for me, now is the time when they would show it. They are fair weather friends only, and I shall not grieve that they are leaving me."

"We must cut down expenses," growled Paul one day after he had risen from a drunken sleep. His voice was husky, his eyes bloodshot, his brows knitted with pain, and his features contracted with nervous irritation. "Business has all gone to the devil! Nothing prospers with me! I am evidently accursed."

"I am so sorry!" said his wife in a soothing and sympathetic voice. "I'll do anything I can. What can we do?"

"I'm sure I don't know," he said, "unless we move into less expensive quarters." Eleanor cheerfully agreed to adopt the suggestion, and that same day, after scanning

the advertisements in the newspapers, she commenced her rounds, and in a couple of days managed to secure smaller apartments in a less fashionable quarter, at about one-half the expense of their first location.

Into these rooms their furniture was soon moved, and again they began housekeeping on a level far below that on which they first started. There was no one to bid them good-bye as they left their pleasant home. Helen Jackson was on a visit to the East, and her mother had been dead some years.

That Eleanor left the beautiful rooms in which she was married, in which her baby was born, without regret, is not probable, but she made no sign. She entered the new rooms as cheerfully as if they had been in a palace, and resumed everyday life with her old courage and her usual smiling face.

In one respect her feelings toward her husband had changed. The ardent love which had followed her wedding, had almost completely disappeared. She occupied a separate sleeping-room, and no longer kissed him as he went to and from their home.

"He is no more my lover," she reflected, "he is my friend. He respects me; he is the

victim of his surroundings. He has the same qualities that he had when our friendship was first established, but they have been paralyzed. They are not obliterated. The extinction of the immortal is, of course, impossible; our friendship was spiritual, and the spiritual cannot die.

"His love for me was earthly, constructed of ephemeral passions which die when their purpose is gratified. As his friend I shall cling to him, labor for him, and save, or, if necessary, die with him."

Paul saw the chasm that was rent between them, and he never dared to attempt to cross it. Even in his degradation, he was able to feel that an impassable distance had come between them, and would remain for all time. He knew that she made a distinction between his spiritual and animal self; and that she held to the one and rejected the other.

However, these thoughts were not very distinct in the mind of Paul. It was rather in the nature of a dim impression that he had lost her affections. His pursuits enthralled all his thoughts. Gaming and the gratification of his affection for the courtesan who had enmeshed him, absorbed his attention. The

transitory nature of what is known as love was shown in his case by the comparative ease with which he transferred it from a woman pure, beautiful, spiritual, to one unchaste, a social outcast, and a creature of immeasurable wickedness.

Let us, for a moment, contrast the surroundings of the two women.

In an humble room, in a rocking-chair, engaged in some needle-work, sits Eleanor. She has divested herself of the dress worn during the day, and has thrown around her form a wrapper of some gray material which harmonizes with her exquisite complexion, and which, soft and yielding, clings to her figure in its statuesque outlines. Her masses of purple-black hair pour down her back and over her shoulders, restrained only by a band of blue ribbon.

Beside her is a small couch beneath whose snowy covering is revealed the delicate form of a child. It rests on its side, with its face turned toward the mother. The right hand is under the cheek, and the left arm is thrown carelessly on the white cover which it rivals in its purity. Heavy locks of hair color the pillow with the rich hue of gold. The long

lashes recline on the cheek and afford a relief to its diaphanous white. A soft crimson has touched the face and a scarlet hue paints the slightly parted lips. It is an exquisite picture, that of the babe, softened by the lamp so shaded as to screen the face from the bright light; a living picture mellowed by sleep, and with its suggestions of life in the coming and going of the just-perceptible breath.

Around both these charming features there is an atmosphere of gentleness and purity. The infant, in its calm slumber, is an expression of supreme repose, and trust in the guardianship of the mother.

The countenance of the latter is glorified with the light of maternal love. Her violet eyes wander now and then to the countenance of the slumbering child, and are softened with an expression of divine tenderness. Her lips move slightly at these moments; she probably murmurs a prayer for the life and happiness of her darling.

In another room in another part of the city, at the same hour of the evening, there is another scene. It is a vast drawing room in whose furnishing no money has been spared. There are gorgeously-framed pic-

tures, rich gilding, mahogany panels, thick carpets, an ornate piano, chandeliers shimmering with gold trimmings, and sofas and chairs with coverings of resplendent colors.

The view is rich beyond comparison, but suggestive of gaudiness, and over-decoration. The pictures are coarse daubs of colors and licentious in their themes. The material of the room is tawdry, oppressive, vulgar.

But the attention attracted to the furnishing of the apartment lingers but a moment on the inanimate objects, and hastens unavoidably to scan its living inmates. They are mostly women. They recline on the highly-colored sofas or sit in the chairs and outshine in their apparel, and their cheeks, the most flaunting bedizenings of the decorations. Clad in the brightest of silks and velvets, with their fingers glittering with gems, their ears carrying priceless diamonds, their long trains reaching far out on carpets, their lace-trimmings, and their innumerable other articles of dress and ornament, dazzle one like a sudden glance at a noonday sun, kaleidoscopic in its hues.

With all their abundance of dress, they are but barely clad. The waists of the robes are shorn far down, revealing the greater portion

of the naked bust ; and their arms are bared to their shoulders. Their cheeks are flaming with rouge, their brows are heightened with pigments ; their eyelids are stained to give a languishing expression to their eyes, and their lips are colored till they are inflammatory crimson.

Notwithstanding the coarse attempts with colors to plant roses on their cheeks, the collection might be beautiful and artistic were it simply considered with reference to form and nudity. With their faces veiled, they would constitute a group instinct with beauty. The feminine form, in its natural outlines, is the most attractive and admirable thing in creation.

But the faces destroy the momentary illusion. They are repulsive without exception, and the knowledge that the exposure of form is to simply stimulate the grossest passions, and not to please the artistic eye, at once deprives the exhibition of all charm.

It is one of these semi-nude creatures, with garish dress, painted cheeks, vermilion lips and pencilled eyebrows that has won the love of Paul Calkins.

Several men are present who sit with their

hats on their heads, cigars in their mouths, and glasses of champagne at their elbows. They are all more or less intoxicated, for no man patronizes one of these infernos when in his sober mind. Some of them sit in the laps of the women. The eyes of the latter blazing with effrontery, stare the men in the face, and they essay by their lascivious caresses to rouse the passions of their visitors. Coarse, equivocal and direct expressions of lewdness flow from their lips. There is not a shy look, a modest feature in any of the painted faces. Even the very atmosphere of the room has a flavor of carnality, and so to speak, is a vile lubricity on tongue and palate.

In another room, nearly as spacious as the one just described, a half dozen female occupants lounge about, pose, attitudinize, dress, and in every possible way endeavor to imitate their white sisters. They are negresses, jet black, with bared bosoms. Their natural wool is clipped from their heads, and wigs of black hair, coarse as the mane of a horse, cover their heads.

White men mingle with them; the champagne circulates, and ribald conversation abounds; lascivious gestures are to be seen;

and in short, this room is the black counterpart of the other, only differing in the hue of its inmates.

It is the house occupied by Natalie, "The Ogress."

Such the conglomerate stew, the home of miscegenation, the perpetual abode of unchastity and all foulness, in which resides the new love of Paul Calkins. Compare it for a moment with the purity, the simplicity, the exquisite charm of the home of the old love, in which are Eleanor and her baby !

II.

A STREAK OF LUCK.

The Hawk club began to "come to grief." One or two of the "tough" element committed suicide; there were two or three shooting occurrences among the waiters who had become demoralized by the example of a portion of the white membership; and at last the club went out of business on the occurrence of the cold-blooded assassination of a Hawk by his mistress.

It was then that Paul Calkins lost what had been his home. He was in the habit of sleeping at the club after being worn out by long sessions at the poker-table, and when the club was closed permanently for repairs, he drifted to the faro-dens and became a regular habitu   of these places. Occasionally he went to his own house, but it was only at long intervals. His infatuation for gaming had alienated his affection for his domestic life.

At this period he had substantially exhausted his fortune, and was on the eve of becoming penniless when there came West Mrs. Calkins, his mother. The old lady had determined to visit the great West and see her eldest son once more before she joined Mr. Calkins in his long sleep in the churchyard in Slaughter Hollow.

She was gladly received by Eleanor, who was delighted to have some company in her loneliness. The old lady staid some months, during which she saw but little of Paul, who was so "engaged in business" that he found time only occasionally to visit his own home.

"It's very sing'lar," said the old lady, "that a man should work himself out of house and home for the sake of gittin' a home. Paul is lookin' real peaked, and he'll kill hisself if he don't take more rest."

She always concluded this class of remarks by recommending the use of certain roots and "yerbs" by Paul to brace up his constitution, and whose value she illustrated by the cases of Nancy Syms, and Deacon Boggins who had used these remedies and had recovered their health after "bein' giv up by the doctors."

The kind old lady took a great liking to the little girl, Aline, her only grandchild, and who conceived an equally strong attachment for the visitor. The grandmother had wonderful stories to tell the child of country life; about a "painter" which her grandmother had met in the woods one day when going to drive up the cows; about how, when she was a little girl, she fell into a goose-pen and was nibbled and pecked almost to death by the naughty "gooses;" and about a wonderful dog that they once had that pulled her out of the mill-pond when she was a "little bit of a tinty-taunty girl!"

All these wonderful narrations, and others, including a muley cow that "bunted jest awful," and was the "most vicious creature you ever seen," and the phenomenal cat that would "suck aigs," and whip all the "naborin' dawgs quicker'n you could say scat;" and others so interested the little Aline that she twined her arms about the nice old lady, and pronounced her the "darlinest old danma that ever was."

One of the results of this association was that just before she concluded her visit to the West, she took Paul aside one day when

she happened to find him at home, and announced to him that she had concluded to give him five thousand dollars which he was to invest for Aline to remain at interest until she was eighteen, and then be given her with her grandma's blessing.

The money was forwarded immediately on her arrival at her Eastern home. In addition to this amount, she sent an equal amount which she asked Paul to invest for her in Western lands or other securities. In her letter she wrote :

“I heard from a Boston man whom I saw on the cars that everybody in his part of the country who has a thousand dollars to spare, sends it West where it draws a bigger interest. I can spare five thousand dollars for investment on my own account. By economy I can live on the rest of my money ; and if nothing happens when I get through with it all, I may give the money invested for me, to Aline, besides the amount of which I now make her a present of.”

For sometime before the reception of the money, Paul had been reduced to substantial penury. He had not even a dollar of his own. In this strait, he lived by borrowing.

Many of his old acquaintances did not know of his actual condition, and readily responded when he asked them for five or a ten, as he "had left home without his wallet." All these loans he regularly carried to the faro-bank, and lost. Once in a thousand times, he would close an evening by winning a few dollars, the most of which he at once gave to Babet, and a few dollars to Eleanor for household expenses.

The arrival of the drafts from the East for ten thousand dollars was at a moment when he was at the end of his resources. Babet was menacing him with disfavor, and cursing his stinginess.

"I have none for to-night," he would answer, when with outstretched palm she would greet him with :

"Give me a fifty ; I must have a new hat !"

"Wait a day or two ; I have had awful luck ! It must turn some day. It can't always last !"

"Ah, you are lying ! You deceive me ! You men always have money, and if you haven't got it, you know how to get it. Go way ! I've no use for a pauper !"

Abashed by her vehemence, and the sharp

glances of her angry eyes, Paul would humbly say :

“Don’t be impatient ! You shall have some to-morrow.” And then he would slink away.

It was on one of these occasions when Babet had been more than usually importunate for money, that the drafts came from his mother. His heavy heart at once became lighter.

“I will give Babet a nice little present, and then I’ll set aside a small sum which I can use against the bank. I can replace it all in a week ! I’m sure to win. Luck must change ! It can’t forever run against me.”

Innumerable are the occasions on which this same style of reason has done duty for the trusted employé who has become infatuated with gambling ! He has lost enough of his own money to cramp him for the moment, and then he lays his hands on funds belonging to his employers.

“I’ll just borrow this for to-night, and will replace it to-morrow. What, Conscience, you tell me this is theft ? You lie ! It is only a loan. Nobody will miss it, and its use for one night will not in the least harm its owners !”

Constantly he loses ; but he must win in the end, soon, and he will borrow a little

more from the employer's safe. Deeper and deeper he sinks in the mire; the cash-book is doctored, and for a time, discovery is averted. Nevertheless, exposure comes, and the robber either flees to Canada, or is arrested, convicted, and sent to the penitentiary.

It is one of the peculiarities of the gambling habit that it thus lures its victim on with promises of success. It makes downright theft seem a simple loan. It assures him that no harm can come, for good luck at the bank, the wheel, or the poker-table will certainly bring him out of the furnace unscathed by flame or smoke.

Babet received her "nice little present," which she accepted with the ferocious shrieks of the delight of a panther as it pounces on a tender, juicy lamb. A smaller portion was handed over to Eleanor for household and personal expenses. Her share was much less than that given to Babet, but she received it with thanks, and made no complaint.

And now Paul gave himself up to the labor of winning back the amounts he had borrowed from the funds sent him by his mother. He came for a brief period out of the despondency which had constantly possessed him.

"I think," he said to his wife, "that things are going to be better. I've invested the money for Aline in a government bond, and that sent me by my mother I shall soon find opportunity to place on some good land security at a fine per cent." He went away with something on his face the nearest approach to a smile that Eleanor had seen for many months. He even noticed Aline a little, and patted her on the head and called her a "good little girl," whereat Aline did not seem to know whether to be pleased or frightened.

For a few months he had a "streak of luck." He won some small amounts and was elated to the very skies. Luck had at last turned; "it was coming his way;" there were stories current among the players, of Bill Tarvish, who had won twenty-five thousand dollars at a sitting; why should he not have the same good fortune? He would have it; he knew he would; he had a "hunch" that it was coming.

One night he sat down to play faro, and won at the outset. "Everything came his way." He felt that this was his opportunity, and he would push it to the utmost. He did,

and staked the largest bets allowed by the game, and won until he had before him winnings to the amount of three thousand dollars.

Ah, fortune had at last come to his relief! He had three thousand, and he would make it ten thousand, or all that the bank had in its roll.

Alas, he had reached the climax of his good fortune. As so often happens, luck took a sudden turn, and he descended with greater rapidity than he had risen. He lost all his winnings and a thousand dollars more. The reaction nearly cost him his life. His heart beat like a trip-hammer; the blood surged into his brain in torrents, and overwhelmed him with its rush and roar. His vision grew clouded, his legs weak, his head dizzy, and he believed that he was dying.

A glass of whisky was handed him by some one who saw his distress. He swallowed the liquid, and then rose and reeled from the room.

"He's hit purty hard, I reckon," remarked a man at the table, as he availed himself of the little confusion of the incident to pick up a "sleeper" which somebody had overlooked.

"He aint got no 'sand,' that's certing," remarked another player, a cattle-dealer from Montana, "and he'd better—who in —— 'pinched' that bet on the queen?"

The gentleman who had "pinched" the bet declined to make himself known, and after much cursing on the part of the Montana man directed at loafers, tramps and thieves who managed to smuggle themselves into a "gentleman's game," the deal went on, and Paul and his losses were forgotten.

It may be mentioned that at the point in the game when Paul reached the maximum of his winnings, something went wrong with the "box" from which the cards were being dealt. Some considerable effort was made to fix it, but without success. The players became impatient at the delay.

"Get another box!" was the cry.

The dealer was not sure they had another; he would see. He was successful. He found another box from which he proceeded to deal, and thenceforth Calkins lost without intermission.

The difficulty in the first box was pretended; it was simply an excuse to put it away, and to supply its place with another in which was

concealed mechanism which enabled the dealer to perfectly control the issue of the cards in the interest of the bank.

It was at the bank in which Lafarge had an interest that the play occurred. When the winnings of Paul grew large, he left, partly because he was permeated by the superstition of some faro-bankers that their presence in certain games brings the house bad luck. Paul lost immediately after his departure, but the reason was not his absence, but the swindling box.

III.

ELEANOR MAKES A DISCOVERY.

At the end of a twelvemonth, Paul had ventured and lost every dollar of the money left him by his mother excepting the sums he had poured into the lap of his Delilah, Babet, and the limited amounts he had from time to time doled out to his wife.

It might be thought that this addition to his burden—the theft of the funds intrusted to him by his mother—would have crushed him into the earth. He had robbed both his mother and his daughter, and it would seem that now, if ever, his conscience would have driven him to desperation, even to suicide, but he was possessed by the demon of gambling. It has no conscience; it is calloused; it constantly suggests to the victim that he is not to blame; that it is to chance that he owes all his misfortunes. He refuses to regard himself as responsible; he says :

“I was honest, and I am yet honest. I have not desired to deceive my mother, and rob my child ; chance has done it. If chance, or fate, or destiny did not wish me to spend my fortune, why did it not aid me to win?”

There is another feature in the composition of a confirmed gambler that braces him up even at the moment when he is weakest. This is the belief always held by him that luck will turn, and he may yet win. The gamester who has passed a hundred thousand dollars over the poker and faro-tables, and the one who has played in his month's rent and the money to buy the Sunday dinner of his wife and children, are both sustained by the hope that they will yet win.

The dead-broke tramp who hangs about the doors of a gambling-room is always encouraged by the certainty as he regards it,—that if he but had a stake he could make a winning. There are always rumors among the gambling fraternity of this or that man who invested a solitary nickel on the wheel, or the turn of the card, and which won and speedily swelled up to the thousands. What has happened may happen again ; and thus one may often see in a gambling-room some

cleaned-out victim, rushing into the recesses of his pockets in the hope of finding some overlooked coin with which he may once more attempt to woo fortune.

Hence, to the ruined gamester, any amount however trivial, may be the means of unlocking the gates of wealth. Five dollars, one dollar, fifty cents, even a quarter, or a dime, may have value in this direction. One who has watched the play about a faro-table will often have seen some emaciated face with hungry eyes gazing eagerly at the piles of chips on the board, and a moment later will notice a long, lean arm steal over the shoulders of the players, and with crooked fingers, garnished with long, dirty nails, deposit a dime or a quarter on some one of the cards.

His hungry eyes are glued on the cards as they come from the box. His cheeks pale with the excess of his emotion, and the pallor gleams with distinctness beneath the sallowness and the dirt. His card is a winner, and his eyes flashes with a triumph such as would illuminate the face of a general assured of a victory, involving the fate of a half million men.

He leaves the doubled stake and waits a

new turn. Beads of sweat stand on his forehead. He has the appearance of one suffering intolerable agony. The card falls, and the calloused dealer, without a thought of the agony he inflicts, coolly sweeps the chips into his pile. And then the impecunious gamester slouches away with a curse that would blast the universe, had it all the force he wishes.

When his money was all gone, Paul was still possessed by the belief that all he needed to recover everything was a stake. To attain this he again fell into the practice of borrowing small sums from anybody who could be induced to lend. He was every day a liar and a sneak. Nothing was too small for his purpose.

"My sister has just telegraphed me that she is coming in on the Blank train, and I have to meet her inside of ten minutes. I haven't a cent, and haven't time to go around to the office. Let me have a couple of dollars until to-morrow, enough to pay for a carriage."

The two dollars would be given him, and a moment later he would hurry with it to the nearest "bank."

One day Eleanor was surprised by the ar-

rival of a grocer's boy with a formidable bill for groceries.

"Mr. Green says he wishes you'd pay this ere account. He says it's been standin' long enough, and he'd like to see the color of yer money!"

The words and the insolent tone of the youth excited some indignation in the breast of Eleanor, and she responded with asperity:

"You are a very disrespectful boy, and I shall tell Mr. Green that you are. Besides this, I do not owe Mr. Green one cent. I have always sent the money for anything I wanted."

"I can't elp that! There's the bill, and Mr. Green tole me to come over ere and git it."

Eleanor at once recovered her equanimity, and said in her usual pleasant manner:

"There must be some mistake in this. Ask Mr. Green if he wont step over here for a moment.

"Yessim!"

Mr. Green soon after dropped in, with an expression of curiosity and amazement on his ordinarily stolid countenance.

"I hope there's no mistake, mam," he said, "in that are bill."

“Why, Mr. Green, I did not know that I owed you, or any other dealer, a single cent!”

It was Mr. Green’s turn to look astonished.

“Haint you been dealin’ in groceries with me, mam? Haint my waggin been here nearly every day, and haint my man put basket after basket in your kitchen?”

“Certainly,” said Eleanor. “But I always have given the —”

Here she interrupted her words, hesitated a moment, a flaming red flashed over her face and forehead, and, then in a broken voice she continued:

“This is unexpected. Please give me a little time to think. I will see you again to-morrow.”

Mr. Green, much pleased with her sweet voice and manner, and considerably puzzled over the matter, took his leave, saying as he went out:

“Good-mornin’, Mrs. Calkins. Don’t worry about this little bill. The fact is that boy o’ mine made a mistake, and took out the wrong bill. I’ll lam him when I git back! Take your own time about the bill.”

The cause that sent the blood over the countenance of Eleanor was the sudden

thought that she had given her husband the money to buy the groceries and other supplies, and he must have kept the amounts and ordered the goods to be charged.

“Oh!” she ejaculated with a pain at her heart, “if he has done this with the grocery-man, has he done it with others?”

Since Paul’s downfall, for many months she had given him from time to time out of her slender total, small amounts to make purchases for the house.

Her anticipations were realized. It was the beginning of the year, and bills came in from the butcher, the milkman, the druggist, from the landlord for five months overdue house-rent, from the coal dealer, the plumber, and from other sources. Some of these, like the bill of the milkman and one or two others, were legitimate, but in the cases of the majority of them she had no difficulty in recalling that she had given her husband the money to pay for them.

As she surveyed the accumulation of bills at the end of a fortnight, and saw their number and the formidable total of their items, and reflected that she did not have a dollar in her possession, and that she was alone in

the world so far as her husband was concerned, for the first time since her marriage her heroic nature gave way, the woman in her nature asserted itself, and she dropped her face on her hands as they rested on a table, and burst into a tempest of tears.

Some minutes passed, during which great sobs shook her frame, and then a light, swift footstep fell on the carpet, and the next instant an arm was wound about her head, and two soft, tiny hands were pushed gently under her hot brow.

“What ails mamma? What makes poor mamma cry?” and at the same time the velvety cheek of Aline was pressed against that of Eleanor, and her golden hair lay like a nimbus of glory over the sloe-hued locks of the mother.

The child tenderly raised the crimson, tear-stained face from the feverish hands, and drew it up and over till it reached and rested on her breast.

“What is it, pretty mamma, good mamma? What makes my little mamma cry? Has some one hurt my little mamma? There, don’t cry, little mamma! Be a good little girl!” and thus saying in a sweet, pleading,

and soothing voice, she kissed the tears from the wet face—as her mamma had often done for her in her moments of sorrow—and tenderly patted the closed eyes, and passed her hand with caressing touch over the mouth and lips of the broken-hearted woman. Suddenly Eleanor roused herself, and clasped the child in her arms with an embrace that seemed as if it were fixed forever, drew Aline to her bosom, and exclaimed :

“Oh, my precious, precious, precious darling! Oh, my sweetness, my daughter, my own, own, my child! You *do* love me darling, you do, you do, you do!” She said this in a voice passionate, almost fierce, as if the utterance of a roused tigress scenting danger to her young. As she spoke, she rained kisses on the upturned face, on the eyelids, on the rosebud mouth, and on the golden hair. And then, recovering with a mighty effort, she said, still holding the little girl to her breast :

“Oh, mamma is sick ; mamma has a naughty headache! I’ll be better soon.”

She thought and thought in silence save that now and then there was the sound of a quick kiss as she bent down to the compassionate face of the little girl.

"Oh, how frightful the humiliation," she reflected. "What will, what can these people think to whom we owe so much! And how can I pay them? They must be paid, and yet how!"

Just then a gleam of light brightened her face.

"Wait here a moment, sweetheart, till mamma runs up stairs. I will sell my jewelry," she said in a low voice, "and pay these debts!"

In a little time she returned. Her complexion had become a waxen pallor with livid tints as if her face had been bruised with some rough instrument. She had received a blow which sent its pangs to her heart.

All her jewelry had disappeared! She knew in an instant who had taken them. It was Paul, her husband.

All this was true. He had taken the money which she had given him to buy food for the family and had used it at the gaming table, and had asked the dealers to keep an account. It was he who had taken his wife's jewels that he might gratify his scandalous passion.

When the full force of the situation dawned on her she felt for the moment an awful con-

striction of her heart, as it were in the clutch of a giant's fingers. The blood surged into her head and blinded her; and she thought she was dying, and with an almost joyful exultation she awaited the final blow. Just then she caught sight of the wondering face of Aline, and with a strong effort wrenched herself, as it were, from the very embrace of death.

“No, I will not, I *dare* not die. I *must* live for you, my darling. Where would your little feet wander without your mother's guiding hand? I *will* live, and for you.”

IV.

DEEPER IN THE SLOUGH.

Paul shuffled into the house the next day. His once fine complexion had become, as it were, covered with a species of leprous spots. His eyes had sunk far into his head, and were faded out. His lips were bloodless and compressed, the lines on his face had deepened, and his hands trembled. When he attempted to look at them his head shook as if he were afflicted with palsy.

He was a wreck. Scarcely a trace remained of the honest, healthy, vigorous youth whom Eleanor married. His brow was corrugated into a perpetual frown; his voice husky and tremulous. He spoke but a word to Aline, and was sullen and reticent.

Eleanor looked on him with a profound commiseration. He was the man who had wrecked her life, but he was not the man she had wedded. This sullen brute, semi-idiotic in his appearance and demeanor, was in no

sense the man she had taken for a husband. That man was dead ; for him she was sorry ; for the creature before her she had only pity. She could not hate him for all the wretchedness he had brought on her, for he was not himself. It was the remnant of her husband ; his worse qualities preserved and enlarged, and his better ones paralyzed.

She did not reproach him, nor did she make any allusion to what had taken place. After a little while, he muttered, " I must be going," and went away.

It was in the first month of the year that these later events occurred. Eleanor made up her mind to call on the various creditors, for the purpose of securing an extension of time for the payment of the indebtedness. She went to the closet for her fur-cloak, and was unable to find it, and it was some time before the truth dawned on her, to the effect that it had been taken by her husband.

The first blow so stunned her that the loss of her valuable cloak did not affect her as much as it would had it been discovered at the outset. Further search revealed that a couple of costly silk dresses were missing, a shawl which she had greatly valued, and

several other things of greater or less value.

She returned to the parlor faint at heart, and despairing. Great as was her trouble, it was not yet complete. Within a few hours after she had discovered the loss of her clothing, a large truck backed around in front of the door. The bell rang, and when she opened the door she found two men, one of whom inquired if Paul Calkins lived there.

"Yes, this is where he lives. Do you wish to see him?"

For answer, one of the men pushed rudely by Eleanor, and entering the house, turned to the other and said:

"Come on! It's all right. This is the place, and here is the stuff."

The fellow who thus spoke was a burly brute, with bloated cheeks, watery eyes, a red, stubby moustache and tobacco-stained lips. He carried the stub of a cigar between his lips, which, with his hat, he did not remove when he entered the room. He had a swagger in his gait, an insolent look in his eyes, an enormous diamond in his cravat, and a rum-scented breath. His companion had the appearance of an ordinary working man, and lacked the impudence and pomposity of the other.

Eleanor was naturally much alarmed at the appearance of the men and their rude entrance. She was silent from sheer astonishment, and waited with apprehension the outcome of the strange intrusion.

The man with the diamond stud looked all over the room, and finally said :

“Is this yere stuff the property of Paul Calkins?”

“Yes.”

“All right then! Here Jim, check ’em off, and let’s see if any of the stuff is missin’. One sofa, 1 center table, 1 stuffed rocker, 1 green easy-chair, 6 common chairs, 1 carpet, 1 rug, 1 pianny, and what’s this?” and so saying, he drew a covering of cloth from something in the corner; “oh, it’s one of them type-machines! That doesn’t count. Lemme see, I guess that’s all. Call in your men, and less load up.”

“What in the name of heaven does all this mean?” asked Eleanor, as she saw the proceedings of the two men.

“Hurry up the men, Jim! It means that I’m a constable, and have seized them goods on a warrant issued by Judge Austin Flint, J. P. That’s the kind of a hair-pin I am!”

“Seize these goods?” said Eleanor. “For what reason do you do this?”

“Becos here’s a paper signed by Paul Calkins in which in consideration of the sum of two hundred dollars in hand paid, he agrees that if said sum is not well and truly paid on a certain date, to-wit, yesterday, then may the plaintiff, without further delay, proceed to seize the said goods, and take possession of the same, and to hold and have the same without recourse, State of Illinois, Cook county double-ess.”

Eleanor did not comprehend any more of this jargon than that the piano and furniture had been seized on a debt incurred by her husband, and were about to be taken away.

Whiter than alabaster, with staring eyes, and breath that came in hysteric gasps, she gazed at the constable unable to say a word. Just then Aline burst into the room with a cry of shrill delight over something she had seen, but seeing the strange men, stopped and with open mouth looked from them to her mother. The fixed, statue-like attitude of the latter frightened her, and with a scream she flew to her side and clasping her hand, ejaculated, “Mamma! Mamma!”

The voice of Aline seemed to wake Eleanor from the stupefaction which had seized on her. She laid her disengaged hand on the head of the child, and as her fingers unconsciously caressed the silken locks, she appeared to collect her wandering thoughts, and turning to the constable, said:

“Do I understand that you have seized this furniture for debt owed by my husband, Mr. Calkins, and that he pledged it for the debt?”

“Yes mum, you are correct; in fact, you have ‘tumbled.’ We’ve got the papers on all the stuff in this room except that are type machine.”

“Is there no remedy in the matter?”

“None at all onless you’ve got the two hundred, and enough more to pay the costs, in yer stockin’; and can produce right now afore the stuff is moved.”

Eleanor’s heart gave a few great throbs, as she remained silent in the presence of her calamity.

“Come on, boys!” said the constable, “we must git this stuff right out without any more fuss. Women always makes a fuss when the law takes their traps, but it doesn’t kill ’em.

They alwos gets over it, and tries it agin. That's your racket, missus; git a new set at the thirty per cent. a month stores, and you can go right on with your business at the old stand."

The insolence of the language of the brute was intensified by his looks and intonations.

Two men who had been waiting outside, entered. "Here," said the constable, "begin at the pianny first and—"

The men moved toward the piano. Eleanor, as if seized by a sudden impulse, stepped in front of them, waved them back, and said:

"Give me a few moments. It is an old friend, and I wish to bid it good-bye."

There was something commanding in her appearance, a something solemn and appealing in her face, that impressed them. They halted and waited, watching her with curious eyes.

Eleanor seated herself on the stool, held the face of Aline to her with both her hands, kissed it, and then turned and dropped her fingers on the keys. For a moment or two they wandered here and there, striking low, sad chords, like the moan in the air which precedes a storm. And then, as if without

design, and as if in response to the tenor of her reflections, she began to play the "Last Hope."

The solemn minor notes of the prelude rolled out with the pathos of the tones of an organ, like the *misere* in the aisles of a cathedral. It was as the voice of penitential prayer. Prostrate as it were, with her face in the dust, the player implored the aid of Heaven.

When she reached the theme, there was a trifle less sadness in the tones as if the prayer might have been heard. Brilliant little runs, like the quick chirpings of song-birds, indicated the existence of happiness, although possibly only in memory; but, in the main, the expression was solemn, as if relating a tale of corroding sorrows.

As the theme progressed, the suggestions of wretchedness and failure were offset by notes that seemed echoes of joyous celestial promises. Faint voices from above thrilled in unison with the harmonies of the player, and added to the mortal strains a flavor of the heavenly and eternal.

Her soul seemed to mingle and become a part of the pathetic composition, and her life,

with its many sufferings and its occasional enjoyments, came out under her touch with the distinctness of a voice. The theme wailed, wept, smiled, hoped, despaired. With infinite softness, the closing notes sank away like the vanishing breath of the dying, and ended with the pacific calm of the dead who have gently passed away, hoping for a brighter morning.

When the last soft tones glided away into silence, she rose from her seat, touched the keys lightly with her lips, and with a look of saintly resignation beaming from her eyes, said in pleasant tones :

“I have finished, sir, and have nothing else to ask for.” She took Aline and shut herself in her bedroom. She heard the jar of the moving furniture, and the sound of the steps adown the stairway, as if it were the carrying out of a coffin with its heavy burden.

In a very brief time, the living room of the Calkins' contained only scattered papers and the typewriter. Eleanor, wrapping Aline as warmly as possible, herself thinly clad, went shivering through the winter's cold to the home of her old friend, Helen Jackson.

One of the creditors for the household-sup-

plies was informed of the situation, and volunteered to see the others. Investigation afforded information as to the real cause of the difficulties, and all unanimously resolved to cancel their bills. Eleanor was not told of this decision further than that none of the creditors was pressing, and that all of them were willing to permit her to take her own time in paying the indebtedness.

One week after she left her home, she was seated at her typewriter before the same desk at which she was first seen in this narration.

Six years had passed. She was the same, and yet changed. Some gray hairs were woven in the woof of her hair; her face was a trifle thinner, and her eyes had lost their dreamy shyness, and looked one frankly in the face.

Six years ago she sat in the same seat. Had she been absent at all? Was it not last evening that she left the office, and was not her marriage and its consequences a mere dream? And thus she thought:

"Dear, old typewriter," she said, as she looked over its keys, whose white surfaces seemed welcoming faces, "you are true to me, and I love you!"

V.

A VIGOROUS SET-TO.

A few evenings after the occurrence of the events just related, Paul, as was his custom two or three times a week, dropped into the New Rest saloon-restaurant. He was partial to the place, for there was something in its alcoholic atmosphere and the flavor of court-essanship that suited his tastes.

One with an uneasy conscience finds some relief in a sympathetic locality, in which there are others who have memories that afflict them, and who are not free from moral taint.

Elise came in shortly after Paul entered, and seeing him, came and sat down by him. Her eyes were dry and fierce, and her expression indicative of mental perturbation.

"How are you getting on with Babet?" she asked.

"Oh, we're friendly," he responded, with some hesitation.

"Oh, indeed! I should think you would be; or, at least, she should be a friend of yours."

"Why?"

"Oh, I know all about it. I know who gave her that fur cloak, and that neck-chain and the rings. You needn't look as if you didn't know about it. You gave them to her."

"Oh, no, you are mistaken. I can't afford to give away seal-skin cloaks, necklaces and diamond rings."

"Bosh, I know better! Now I want to tell you that you are a chump of the first water. You are a fool, a simpleton, a gudgeon, anything that is stupid and idiotic."

"What is the matter with you? What do you mean? Why am I a chump?"

"Because you allowed that pot-colored little beast to rob you. She's taking everything you give her, and at the same time is stuck on Lafarge. She doesn't care the snap of her finger for you!" Elise grew very red in the face as she proceeded; but her emotion probably was due more to her jealousy of her old lover, Lafarge, than from indignation over the robbery of Paul by The Panther.

"Why, Lafarge has told me a hundred times that he hated Babet, that she is treacherous, and that I had best keep out of her way."

"Of course! He wanted you to dislike her and leave her, so that he would find less opposition. But he is deceiving you the same as she is."

"I can hardly believe it."

"Well, believe it or not as you like. I give you notice that not only has she gone back on you, but that she will keep you along, bleeding you at every step, and will end by landing you in Joliet. Neither her greed nor her heartlessness has any limit."

When Paul left the New Rest, he was much disturbed over what had been said to him by Elise. His infatuation for Babet was overpowering; for her, and to incidentally gratify his passion for play, he had robbed his own wife, and for this he expected gratitude and devotion.

That night he went to the gambling-house of Lafarge, and soon after was engaged in a game of cards in which Lafarge was a participant. The latter was affable as usual, and yet Paul fancied as he caught the glance now and then of the other, that he detected an expression of hostility.

The game proceeded without anything remarkable to characterize it for some hours. Lafarge seemed to be more than ordinarily anxious for Paul to drink, while, for a wonder, and for some unexplainable reason, the latter was more abstemious than was his regular custom.

There came a point in the game when a very large sum of money had been collected in a "jack-pot." A "raise" before the cards were "helped," finally drove everybody out except Lafarge and Paul. The two then "raised" each other for a considerable sum, and at last called for the draw.

Lafarge was the dealer, and directly opposite him was his single opponent. The latter stood "pat," that is, did not take any cards. Paul had thrown himself well back in his chair when the preliminary betting had ceased. His position was so low that he saw the bottom card of the pack as Lafarge picked it up to "help" the hands. It was the ace of spades. Lafarge held the cards a moment as if studying what to do on account of Paul's taking no cards, and then he took one.

Glancing at his cards, Lafarge bet a small sum, and was immediately "raised" by the

other. Several hundred dollars were added to the already enormous pile of chips and bank-bills, when Paul, whose funds were about exhausted, "called" the other, and spread out on the table a king-full.

"No good!" exclaimed Lafarge, with an oath; "I can beat that!" and he spread out a "full-hand" with aces.

Paul glanced at the hand in stupefaction. He was again ruined. Suddenly, among the three aces he saw the ace of spades. With a quick motion he threw his arm around the pile in the center of the table, and drew it over to his side.

"What — — are you doing?"

"I'm taking my own, that's all."

"What's the matter with you? Haven't I the best hand?"

"No sir! before you helped the hands I saw that ace of spades on the bottom of the pack. You slipped it into your hand, and that's where you got that ace-tull."

"You are a — liar!" shouted Lafarge, as he sprang to his feet, with blazing eyes and fierce gestures.

"And you are a swindler and a thief!" was the response, as Paul hurriedly pushed back his chair, and faced his opponent.

They rushed toward each other with the fury of two savage bulls. Paul's athletic training—taken at the suggestion of Lafarge—was of immense value to him at this critical moment. As the latter came within arm's length, Paul stepped lightly a little one side and before his antagonist could change his course he received a blow from the fist of the other which staggered him, and nearly brought him to the floor. He recovered himself, and again made a rush for his opponent.

Twice did the fist of Paul encounter his face before they came together in a clinch. The grapple held but a moment. Paul skillfully tripped his opponent, who fell, and received the blow of the body of Paul as he came down on him. At this moment the other players had recovered somewhat from their consternation over the shape matters had taken, and interfered and pulled apart the writhing, panting contestants.

Lafarge's face was considerably bruised, and the blood flowed freely from his face and stained the white of his shirt-front with irregular blotches.

"I'll kill you yet, — — you!" he vociferated as he was being held by the other players,

and shook his arms and fists frantically in the direction of Paul.

Paul gathered the money on the table, went to the home of Babet, and threw the most of it in her lap. So grateful was she in her reception of the gift, and so gracious in her treatment of him that when he left he was in a delirium of joy, firmly convinced that he was her hero and idol, and that the statements of Elise were the inventions of a jealous woman.

The stake on which he made the winning from Lafarge was the last realized from the sale of a portion of his wife's dresses. What remained after he had made a present of the greater portion to Babet, he speedily lost at the faro-bank. It left him substantially without resources. His own watch and diamond pin he had long since pawned, and spent the proceeds. His clothing had become shiny and greasy, his hat showed lines of indentation, his shoes were dilapidated and run over at the heels. He was fast approaching the appearance of a tramp.

Now and then he obtained a dollar or two as a loan from some old acquaintance who had known him in his better days; and this,

after a small amount was spent in free lunch saloons, he played into the bank.

Even the bankers who had won his money began to be weary of his appearance, and in some cases ordered the janitor to refuse him entrance. It may be thought that at this period of his extreme degradation reflection would have blasted him as he thought over his life. But he had provided against this; he had taken to opium, and in this way deadened the last of his sensibilities.

Occasionally some sympathetic dealer would permit him to act as the "lookout" during a game, and toss him a dollar for the service. Now and then he picked up a stranger, and led him into a game for which he received a percentage on the amount won from the visitor. Now and again he earned a dollar or two by acting as a "capper;" that is, he sat in a game when a stranger entered, and with chips provided him by the house he played as if a regular customer. This would often induce men to enter the game who would hesitate to sit down at a table where there were no others.

He worked out in his mind ingenious "systems" for "beating the bank," and tried

them all, and always lost. On the ground that he had once known reputable business men, he was allowed a share in poker games run in the rear of some saloon, or on the secluded upper floor of the business blocks. Beside this he acted as touter, visiting certain men whom he once knew, and whom he knew to be fond of the game, and induced them to play in the game by the statement that other reputable men whom they knew were in the habit of playing in it. In this way a decent citizen would be inveigled into the game, and his presence was at once used to influence others.

Two or three genuine business men thus roped into a game would be the prey of sharps who appeared as railway conductors, commercial men, and in other disguises.

Through one of these fortuitous combinations of luck which now and then favor the unlucky, Paul one evening ventured a solitary quarter of a dollar on a card and won. His luck continued till he had won about a hundred dollars, when it turned on him and he drew out. With this money he bought a suit of clothes and some clean underwear, and for the moment was the semblance of his former self.

Thus refitted he hurried to the home of Babet, whom he had not visited for some weeks, owing to his dilapidated appearance. Gaining her presence, she rushed into his arms with a shriek of delight.

“Oh, my baby, where have you been so long? I’ve almost died because I could not see you!”

She seated herself on his lap, and caressed his hair and cheeks with her slender fingers.

“And what nice thing has my baby brought his Babet, to-night?”

“Nothing, I’m sorry to say.”

“Nothing? Nothing at all? Not one little thing?”

“No, Babet. In fact, I’m out of luck. I haven’t a dollar to my name. I’m going to ask a favor of you, Babet, which I know you’ll be glad to grant.”

“A favor of me?” Her voice lost its caressing tone, and she removed her fingers from his cheeks. “What do you want of me?”

“Babet, you know that when I had money, I gave it to you with an open hand. I have gladly poured thousands of dollars into your lap, and have given you presents which cost

other thousands. Now, I want you to let me have two or three hundred dollars. I have a chance to get an interest in a game in which I am sure I can make a good deal of money."

She sprung from his lap with the light agility of a wild cat, turned toward him, and with her face full of scorn and contempt, her eyes blazing with fury, she screamed:

"What do you take me for?"

"I take you for my old friend, Babet, the most charming—"

"Charming be ——! You are a fool, an imbecile!"

"But, Babet," feebly interposed Paul, "I need the money; I almost need it for food. You have had large sums from me, and I want only a small loan, which I will soon pay you with big interest."

"You make me tired! I let you have money? Not a sou! I am one who receives, and not one who lends money. What, do you suppose that I shall allow myself to be ruined by men, and then loan them money? Do you suppose that after being obliged to pander to the beastly vices of drunken brutes I am going to become a philanthropist and use my money to relieve them of the punishment which justly falls on them?"

“ But, Babet, hear me — ”

“ I will hear nothing; I have heard you say that you are a pauper, and that is all I wish to hear. Leave me! I have no use for moneyless men! Go and get money; win it at gambling; steal it; kill to get it; get it, I care not how, then come to me! Bring me money, jewels, rich presents, and I am yours, body and soul! But you have no money. Go away, and never see me again till your hands are filled with gold and diamonds!”

So saying, she turned to leave.

With a savage oath, Paul rose, made a single stride toward her, grasped her slender throat in his fingers, and compressed them till her tongue protruded and her eyes were pushed out in their sockets. She wilted when he dropped her, and she fell in a heap on the floor. Giving the insensible mass a heavy kick, he left the room.

Such brutality seems incredible, and yet, among these women and their “lovers” such assaults are not at all uncommon.

Enraged, humiliated, crushed, he strode like a maniac along the streets, sowing horrid blasphemies and furious imprecations through the darkness.

“It is that cursed Jew!” he thought, after his incoherent rage had somewhat spent itself; “and, by ——, I’ll get even with him if it costs me my life!”

VI.

THE SACRIFICE IS FOUND.

When the contusions on his face had disappeared in part, and he was in a condition to appear in public, Lafarge determined to see Natalie. His hatred of Paul had increased a thousand fold since the latter had caught him cheating at cards, and had given him a beating.

It was about midnight when he reached the home of the Ogress. It was winter, and a tremendous storm of wind and snow swept over the city, driving every one under cover. The storm roared among the chimneys and steeples; it beat the innumerable telegraph wires, which resented the blows with melancholy clamors; it twisted the tree-tops and howled with a dismal pathos at the street corners, and across the public squares.

Facing this storm, which was somewhat in harmony with his feelings, he was keyed

up to a stormy pitch when he entered Natalie's room, and was prepared for any extravagance. It did not, therefore, particularly surprise him to see that the room had been fitted for sacrifice, as the Ogress called it, when she intended to offer special worship to her Fetich.

Every portion of the room was shrouded in black. The bureau which served as the altar had been moved into its place, and beneath the black cloth which covered its top, Lafarge saw the outlines of the skull. Around the neck of the alligator was entwined a wide strip of crape.

Natalie was clad in her usual dress of some sable stuff, and in her long, coarse hair there was woven, or braided innumerable small cords of ebon hue, and which had the effect to spread out her hair till it hung down her shoulders like a long, wide mat.

"You were expected, and you are welcome!" she said, as Lafarge entered. "The Fetiches are out to-night, and are riding on the storm. Hear them shout! They are rejoicing, for they scent blood in the air. To-night blood will flow, and I have prepared for the sacrifice."

Lafarge felt a chill as she spoke. She seemed to be actuated by insane impulses. Her voice was swollen and harsh ; her eyes were enlarged and emitted flashes like a black diamond. Her long tusks, white as milk, gleamed ominously against the jet background of her face. Her body and limbs were in incessant motion ; and she seemed to be in a species of ecstatic frenzy that shook and twisted her as the storm outside swayed the leafless branches of the trees.

“ See ! ” she ejaculated ; “ all is ready for the sacrifice ; here is the cup and here the sponge, both sacred to the worship of the priest, my father ! ” She lifted the cloth over the skull and revealed a small cup of scarlet hue, and a sponge white as snow.

“ Maumee,” said Lafarge, “ I am in trouble ; my enemy follows me and has everlastingly disgraced me. I have made him a pauper ; I have beggared his mother, his wife and his child ; I have taken away from him the woman whom he loves, and yet my hate is unsatisfied. He struck me in the presence of others, and the disgrace of the blow sears my heart. Give me some revenge more distressing than beggary, more poignant than

the loss of family and honor, friends and reputation."

"You will be avenged. I see corpses, with dull, glassy eyes! Wait with patience. Not many hours hence the catastrophe will be here. I hear the beating of its wings against the bosom of the storm. I hear it coming, it is almost here! Go now, and wait!"

* * * * *

A prolonged debauch had been indulged in by Paul Calkins after the occurrence in which he was denounced by Babet and which ended in his striking her to the floor. When most intoxicated he became maudlin in sentiment as well as in liquor, and frequently shed tears over himself, and over the recollection of the brutal punishment he had inflicted on Babet. He excused her, at these moments, for her rejection of him.

"She did right," he would think. "So marvellous a creature as she, deserves the tribute of gold and precious stones."

So low had he descended that even his contemptuous rejection by a wretched courtesan did not offend him. "I deserved it," he concluded.

He had been drinking heavily at this time,

and it is not therefore astonishing—for anything may be expected from the vagaries and eccentricities of intoxication—that he determined to go and see Babet. He would beg her pardon for his brutality; he would convince her of his affection, and without doubt she would receive him again. He remembered the flash of her great black eyes, the caressing touch of her soft fingers, and his fancy, heated by stimulants, rose to the temperature of fever, as he reflected over the memories of their past.

It was the same night on which Lafarge visited Natalie that Paul started to again see Babet. He encountered the storm which beat against him savagely, as if attempting to express its dislike for his nefarious errand.

It was about one o'clock in the morning when he reached the house. He rang, the door was opened. Knowing the way to Babet's room, and hoping to find her there, he made no inquiry of the servant who admitted him. He went up a flight of stairs, turned down a long hall at the extreme end of which was the room he sought. As he neared the room he heard voices in the room, one of which was Babet's and the other that of

a man. The heavy carpets drowned his footsteps, so that his approach was unnoticed.

Just as he reached the door the conversation dropped to a low tone whose theme could not be heard by the listener. His head swam, a choking sensation came into his throat, and his heart throbbed vehemently as he discovered that a man was in the room. He almost unconsciously turned the door-knob, and to his surprise the door opened. Its occupants had evidently neglected to fasten it. Impelled by an irresistible impulse and reckless from alcohol, he entered the room and then shut the door and shot the bolt into its socket.

The noise of fastening the door attracted the attention of the two people already in the room. Babet lay across the bed in her night-dress, and as the noise of the bolt attracted her attention, she glanced up, saw Paul, and said :

“ You wretched cur, how dare you ? ”

At this utterance, the half-dressed man who was standing close by the bed with his back to the door, turned quickly, and faced the intruder, and Paul saw before him the scowling face of John Lafarge.

“You —— scoundrel!” came simultaneously from the lips of the two men.

Lafarge threw his hand behind him to his hip pocket, pulled a pistol and was raising it to a level of the breast of Paul with the ejaculation, “Now —— —— you, I’ve got you, and I’ll kill you,” when it was seized by Paul in such a manner that when the trigger was pulled the hammer was intercepted by his thumb. He closed with Lafarge, and in the struggle Lafarge fired at a moment when Paul wrenched his body aside, and the bullet passing under his arm, struck Babet in the left breast. An instant later Paul wrested the pistol from the hands of Lafarge, placed it against his temple and fired. Lafarge threw up his arms with a convulsive motion, and reeling around, fell on his face across the bed.

All this occurred in a few seconds. The moment Lafarge fell, Paul dropped the pistol, jumped to a window, raised it, and sprang out into the storm and darkness.

As he disappeared a door concealed by curtains on another side of the room opened softly, and Natalie glided swiftly in. She carried the sponge which she dipped in the blood flowing from Babet’s wound, and that

on the forehead of Lafarge, and then glided back as she came, and disappeared.

The door led into her own room, where was the preparation for the sacrifice. She lifted the black covering above the skull, put the reddened sponge in the cup, placed it before the teeth of the skull, and then exclaimed with rapture and exultation :

“It has come at last, oh, my father, the blood of sacrifice !”

Meanwhile the noise of the pistol-shots had aroused the inmates of the house. They tried to enter the room, but the door was fastened within. The police were notified and the door broken open.

Babet lay across the bed with the blood oozing from the wound in her breast, while Lafarge lay across her lower limbs with his feet on the floor, as if he had thrown himself in this position to protect her.

Both were dead. A pistol with two empty chambers lay on the floor. There were no signs of a struggle, and the most patient investigation at the time, and later, never afforded any elucidation of the mystery. At this date the public is undecided as to whether there was a third person involved who com-

mitted the deed, or whether it was a murder and a suicide, or a double suicide.

When Paul jumped through the window, he struck on a pile of boards and other material, gathered for fuel by Italians living in the rear. The distance was only a couple of feet. He easily and safely crossed to the edge of the alley, into which he sprang, and disappeared in the darkness. The storm still raged so that few people were abroad, and the chances of his being recognized were infinitesimal.

* * * *

A month or so after this occurrence, Eleanor, while seated at her typewriter, was surprised at the appearance of a policeman in full uniform.

"I'm lookin' for a lady, Missus Calkins. Do you know her?"

"That's my name," she responded, with some trepidation.

"Well, mam, there's a young fellow at the hospital who is dyin' and he asked to see you."

"Do you know what his name is?"

"No, mam, I don't. He's a pauper patient, and proud-appearin', and mebbe doesn't like to give his real name. Will ye see him?"

H

She thought a moment; it might be Paul; at any rate she would go.

She reached the hospital and gave her name. Soon after she was led into one of the wards, and taken to the side of a white couch.

"It's a bad case of pneumonia," said the nurse, "and he's pretty near gone now."

A strange figure met her sight; but in the emaciated countenance, the ghastly pallor of the face, the deep, sunken and faded eyes she recognized her husband. His breath came and went in short, painful gasps, accompanied by a hoarse rattling. His eyes were staring into vacancy, and he did not notice the presence of a new face.

Tears gushed into the eyes of Eleanor as she saw the pitiful object, and she bent over the face and said:

"Paul! Paul! Don't you know me? It is Eleanor."

A nurse poured a spoonful of some stimulant between the rigid jaws. Into the dull and glassy eyes there slowly came a gleam of intelligence. He endeavored to speak. She bent down her ear to his lips and heard him feebly articulate in a fast-choking voice, the single word, "F-o-r-g-i-v-e—"

When she raised her face and looked at him again the gleam of intelligence had vanished. The jaw had fallen and the eyes had turned upward till but little save the whites were visible.

“He’s gone!” said the nurse, who happened to pass at that moment.

The next day a hearse and a single carriage occupied by two women and a little girl went out to Rose Hill cemetery. As the attendant rounded up the filling of the grave, the mourners turned away.

“Good-by, husband!” said one in a voice choking with tears.

“Good-by *dear, dear* papa!” said the little girl, as she clung to her mother’s dress and buried her face in its folds.

VII.

A HAND FROM THE FURTHER SHORE.

A short time after the death of Paul, Eleanor received a letter from the bank with which he had formerly done business, stating that there was in the safe a package of papers which was left there by her husband for safe-keeping, and which they would be pleased to deliver to her either in person or on order.

She soon secured the package, and found it to consist of a large envelope, sealed and labeled "Paul Calkins; to be left till called for." She broke the seal and within found a letter in an ordinary business envelope, and a larger inclosure folded like a legal paper. On the smaller paper was written :

"To be opened only after my death.

PAUL CALKINS."

Eleanor opened this at once. Within were several pages closely written in the well-known handwriting of Paul. Its contents were as follows, omitting the date :

“ I have been married eighteen months and am a father. I ought to be the happiest man in existence. I have youth, perfect health, a prosperous business, a reasonable fortune, good social position, and a wife whom I should adore for her amiability, her marvelous beauty, and her devotion. No man living has a fairer present, or a more promising future than I.

“ In spite of all these I am not happy. I distrust myself. I find that I have acquired a love of stimulants and of gaming. I cannot shake them off; in truth, while I know all the deadly consequences of their indulgence, they are so fascinating that I do not even care to rid myself of them. I am gliding down a descent at whose bottom I see a quagmire which I know will receive, engulf and destroy me, and yet, even now when I might escape, the motion is so delicious that I cannot resist its seductions.

“ In proportion as these vices possess me, the love I bear for my wife decreases. Stronger passions than those underlying love have usurped its place. My friendship for her alone remains. Stimulation is diverting my nature, and I begin to regard the depths with more reverence than the heights; hell,

with its crimson flames, its surging billows, is more attractive in its hurry, its activities, its tremendous effects, than heaven with its pale lights, its unvarying surface, its pious monotony.

“ I stand on the edge of a precipice beneath which yawns eternal infamy. I have not yet taken the leap, but my brain is dizzy, and I know that I shall hurl myself over the brink. I feel my nature developing all the instincts of wickedness, and I know that the time is coming when I will hesitate at no crime to gratify the demands of the demons of gaming and drink which have seized me.

“ Thus feeling and believing, I have assiduously tried to devise some measure which, while it would not in the least mitigate the certainty and horror of my fate, might, to some extent, soften the calamity in the hearts of others, innocent and profoundly attached to my life and fortunes.

“ The inclosed paper will reveal the plan I have adopted. It is in the interest of my only friend, my wife, whose saintly soul little deserves the fate about to overwhelm her. She is the rarest, the purest of women and should pass through life along a pathway

strewn with roses, and breathe only an atmosphere vivified by celestial agencies. But fate has ordered for her a season of torture. The fiends which have taken me in charge are not satisfied that their victim alone should suffer; they demand the tears, the groans of wives and children.

"Let whoever may read this after my death, pity, not me, but those unfortunates whom my accursed destiny has dragged down with me. For them I have sought to secure a resurrection; for me there is none."

Eleanor opened the other envelope with shaking fingers. Within was a paid-up policy for a life assurance for twenty-five thousand dollars, in favor of "My sweet wife and friend," so it read, "Eleanor Wright Calkins."

Tears rained in torrents from her eyes when she finished the perusal of these papers.

"Love died," she thought, "but friendship still lives and is immortal, for here it extends its hand to me from beyond the grave!"

THE END.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE.

Among all Fetich worshipers it is believed that sacrifice is necessary to placate the object of worship. It is also believed among them that a remnant of a dead body contains the qualities of the original, living person. On this point, Herbert Spencer says: "The facts show how sacrifices to the man recently dead pass into sacrifices to his body. * * Among some classes, the bones, legs, arms, skulls of the principal chiefs are preserved by their descendants, under the belief that the spirits exercise guardianship over them."

It is not uncommon for this class of worshipers to pay homage to a tuft of hair, the skull and the like of a relative, and, according to the same writer: "In cases of sickness and other calamities, they present offerings of food to the skulls of the departed." In the private hut of the King of Adolee, the skull of the monarch's father is preserved in a clay vessel placed in the earth. He gently rebukes it if his success does not happen to answer his expectations. Of the Fetich devotees it is said, "They worship their Fetiches, and offer them blood; they pierce their ears,

their shoulders and their breasts, and collect the blood with a sponge and spread it before the skulls."

The gambler is a Fetich worshiper in the full sense of the word. Under the words "hoodoo" and "mascot" he worships the good and bad genius of chance, in a hundred different shapes. It may be a coin, a button, a ring, or any other of a score or hundred material things, to each of which he affords the regard that the Fetichist pays to a stone wrapped in a rag, or the shinbone of an ancestor.

The superstition of gamblers is astounding. It is stated as a fact that three well-known brothers of Chicago, when they first came here to open a gambling-house, used every morning to burn an old shoe, and meanwhile dance about it, and all to placate fortune.

In a noted gambling-house in Chicago it has been the custom to sprinkle a mixture of salt and pepper surreptitiously around the seats of the players, so as to "hoodoo" them. In the same house it was the custom to sprinkle the same mixture on the clothing of a player who was having a run of luck—the application being made as he entered the room. There are superstitions about cats. One establishment, as is believed by the fraternity, lost steadily for three years, when a stray gray cat came along, and the bank commenced winning, and continued to win till the cat was stolen, when it again lost.

The Israelitish player, if losing, will take off his finger ring and put it in his pocket. Other gamblers find luck in giving something to beggars, in touching the hump of a hump-back, or a bald head, in playing certain days, and in refraining from playing on certain others.

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